Indoor Air Quality (EPA)

Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke from cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products can trigger asthma and other respiratory illnesses especially in children. To help protect children from secondhand smoke, do not smoke or allow others to smoke inside your home or car.

(American Cancer Society) Each year in the U.S. secondhand smoke is responsible for:

- an estimated 46,000 deaths from heart disease in non-smokers who live with smokers
- about 3,400 lung cancer deaths in non-smoking adults
- other breathing problems in non-smokers, including coughing, mucus, chest discomfort, and reduced lung function
- 150,000 to 300,000 lung infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in children younger than 18 months of age, which result in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations annually
- increases in the number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million children who have asthma
- more than 750,000 middle ear infections in children
- Pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke are also at increased risk of having low birth-weight babies.

Radon

Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in the U.S. It is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can enter a home through cracks and openings in floors and walls that are in contact with the ground. Testing your home is simple and inexpensive.

- **For Existing Homes:** Test for radon — testing is the only way to know if radon is in your home. Do-it-yourself test kits are convenient and accessible, or you may choose to have a professional test your home. If the test result indicates your radon level is too high, a qualified radon service professional can install a radon mitigation system.

- **For New Construction:** Radon-resistant new construction (RRNC) draws radon from the soil and vents it through a pipe to the roof, preventing its entry into the house. This technique uses common materials and building skills. RRNC costs less than retrofitting a similar radon reduction system after the house is finished. New home buyers should ask their builder to include RRNC features. All new homes, even new RRNC ones, should be tested for radon.

Carbon Monoxide

Fireplaces and leaking chimneys are sources of carbon monoxide. Ventilate rooms that have fireplaces, make certain the flue damper is operational and fully open when in use, and ensure the chimney is properly sealed.
Combustion heating and cooling appliances such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning units, gasoline-powered heaters, and other appliances are sources of carbon monoxide. Properly install, use, and maintain fuel-burning appliances. Install carbon monoxide detectors in living spaces.

**Mold**

Bathrooms are a common source of mold. Humidity from showers can cause moisture problems, which will lead to mold growth. Mold can cause allergic reactions, asthma, and other respiratory ailments. Installing and using a ventilation fan will help to control moisture and inhibit mold growth.

Basements can be damp. Install a properly sized dehumidifier to help keep your basement at an appropriate humidity level and reduce the potential for mold. It is important to dry water-damaged areas and items within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.

**Dust**

Dust mites can trigger allergy and asthma attacks. Dust mites are everywhere especially on pillows, blankets, carpets, upholstered furniture, and stuffed toys. Dust and vacuum your home regularly, wash bedding, and use allergen-proof mattress and pillow covers.

**Pet Dander and Hair**

- Pets can trigger allergy and asthma attacks due to dander and hair. Keep them out of the sleeping areas, and away from upholstered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys. Vacuum and clean carpets, rugs, and furniture often.

**Pesticides**

Pesticides, used to rid homes of rodents, termites, insects, and other pests, can irritate the eyes, nose, and throat; damage the central nervous system and kidneys; and increase the risk of cancer. Don’t leave food out, and if you must use pesticides, ventilate during and after use and follow directions to limit exposure. Use non-chemical methods of pest control when possible.

**Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)**

Common household cleaners, often placed under the kitchen sink, release Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), when used and stored. Store household products that contain chemicals according to manufacturers’ instructions and keep all products away from children. Consider purchasing cleaners without VOCs.

Paints, resins, paint thinners, and chemicals, and other products, will still release Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) even while stored properly. Make sure there is plenty of ventilation when painting, remodeling, or using other products that may release VOCs. Consider purchasing low and no VOC products.