

Creating a Healthy Home

Now that summer is here you are probably opening up your windows and enjoying the lovely warm air and sunshine. But that usually isn't the case the rest of the year. Here are some tips to help you create and maintain a healthy home:

If you smoke, please smoke **outside** and wear a smoking jacket and hat. All those ***toxins in cigarette or cigar smoke are very dangerous especially to children, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.*** There are 4,000 chemicals in one cigarette and 40 of them are carcinogenic. Protecting your clothing with a jacket and hat will reduce your children's exposure to those chemicals.

One of the best things that you can do for the health of your home is to remove your shoes at the door. Outside we step in lead, arsenic, pesticides, insecticides and all sorts of other chemicals. Outside they can be broken down by the sun and the rain – inside they are not. Make this easy for your friends and family – install shoe racks at the front door (or the door that is used the most), install a high quality commercial grade walk off mat at the exterior of the door, provide a basket with slippers and socks as well as a chair to sit on. Removing one's shoes at the door also keeps your house a lot cleaner!

In terms of cleaning, we really don't need any commercial products – white vinegar and baking soda work great! Mix white vinegar with water in a squirt bottle and use it to wash windows and hard surfaces such as your wood or vinyl flooring. Your house may smell like a salad but you're breathing better air for it! Baking soda makes a great scouring powder as well. These products are incredibly inexpensive and will help you save money, your health and the environment.

What to do with carpeting? The best surface in the house is a hard surface as they are much easier to clean and to keep clean. Carpeting can harbor dust mites, chemicals, dust, pesticides etc. One must vacuum a lot longer than you think you have to, to remove the deep dust. We recommend vacuuming at least once weekly using a high quality vacuum that has a HEPA filter and a bag. Empty the bag when it is half full and consider upgrading to an ultra filtration bag. If you have a bagless vacuum, empty the canister outside. Before emptying, place a plastic bag on top of the canister and once you've turned the canister over, clamp down on the bag quickly – this will reduce your exposure to the dust.

Damp dust weekly using a lint free cloth and only water. If you want to put some oil on the cloth, mineral oil works well. Dust contains a multitude of chemicals that are not healthy to breathe. The smaller the particle, the potentially more dangerous they are, as they can pass directly into the bloodstream.

Consider using environmentally friendly products whenever you clean, shower or bathe. Highly perfumed products may contain petrochemicals and other chemicals such as phthalates that may be harmful to you, your child and to the environment.

Open your windows and ventilate daily. According to the EPA our ***indoor air can be up to 5 times as polluted as our outdoor air!*** All sorts of products in the home can be off gassing – furniture, bedding, carpeting, carpet padding, paint, furnishings, dry cleaned clothes, dryer sheets, candles, plug in air fresheners, curtains, etc. Open your windows and doors frequently (weather and safety permitting) and read labels before purchasing any household products.