

Environmental Wellness Checklist

What surrounds you each day in your home, work, or neighborhood can affect your health. Here are some tips to make your environments safer:



MAKE YOUR HOME HEALTHIER

Take a look around your home. Do you know what's in your household goods and products? Some chemicals can harm your health if too much gets into your body. Becoming aware of potentially harmful substances and clearing them out can help keep you and your family healthy.

To reduce toxic substances in your home:

- Clean with non-toxic products.
- Dust using a damp rag.
- Use a wet mop to clean floors.
- Vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Open a window or use a fan to improve air circulation when you're cleaning.
- Have a good ventilation system.
- Wash your & your children's hands often.



REDUCE YOUR ALLERGIES

A change in season can brighten your days with vibrant new colors. But blooming flowers and falling leaves can usher in more than beautiful backdrops. Airborne substances that irritate your nose can blow in with the weather. When sneezing, itchy eyes, or a runny nose suddenly appears, allergies may be to blame. Take steps to reduce your exposure to allergens.

To reduce allergies:

- Avoid going outdoors when you're having allergies.
- If you go outside, wash your hair and clothing when you come inside.
- Keep humidity levels low in the home.
- Avoid upholstered furniture and carpets.
- Wash your bedding in hot water once a week.
- Vacuum the floors once a week.
- Talk with your doctor about medications and allergy shots.



STAY SAFE DURING HOT WEATHER

Heat is the biggest danger in the summer months. Being hot for too long can cause many illnesses, some of which can be deadly. But the warmer weather also brings lots of new opportunities to improve your health. Here's how to make the most of the summer months.

To create healthy summer habits:

- Do outdoor activities in the early morning or evening.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Use sunscreen that blocks UVA and UVB.
- Use sunglasses that block UVA and UVB.
- Try to stay in the shade when outdoors.
- Exercise in an air-conditioned space if possible. Or do water workouts.
- Drink plenty of liquids, especially water.



GUARD AGAINST COLD WEATHER

The frosty air of winter can be invigorating. But cold air can also pose threats to your health, whether you're indoors or outside. Learn to recognize the signs of your body temperature dropping too low, and take steps to keep yourself and your family warm and safe during the chilly season.

To guard against the cold:

- Dress in layers.
- Cover up with blankets.
- Wear a jacket with a waterproof and windproof outer shell.
- To keep warm at home, wear socks, slippers, and a cap or hat.
- Set your heat at 68° or higher when it's cold outside. To save on heating bills, close off rooms you're not using.
- If you need help paying your heating bills, you may qualify for an energy assistance program.



AIR QUALITY AND YOUR HEALTH

The combination of high temperatures, pollution, and airborne particles can brew up an unhealthy mixture in the air, just waiting to enter your lungs. This can make it hard to breathe and sap your energy. But air pollution can also occur inside—in homes, offices, or even schools. If you're regularly exposed to high levels of unhealthy air, the health consequences can linger for months or even years.

To reduce the effects of poor quality air on your health:

- Avoid outdoor activities in the afternoons on warmer days, when the risk of air pollution is highest.
- Avoid strenuous outdoor activities if the air is polluted. Check your region's air quality index at www.airnow.gov.
- Reduce pollutants in your home. Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Avoid burning candles, incense, or wood fires. Run fans or open a window when cooking. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.



TEST FOR TOXIC GASES

Radon gas typically moves up through the ground and comes into homes through cracks in floors, walls, and foundations. Sometimes it enters the home through well water. Whatever the source, your home can trap radon inside, where it can build up. You might not be able to see or smell radon, but it can still harm you—slowly, and in ways that you can't detect.

To fight radon:

- Start by testing your home. You can do it yourself or hire a professional.
- If you find a radon problem in your home, take steps to fix it.
- If you smoke, stop. Smoking is an especially serious health risk when combined with radon.
- Get help for your radon questions at this national hotline: 1-800-55RADON (557-2366).



STAY SAFE IN THE WATER

Summer is a great time to go out and have fun in the water. But recreational waters—including swimming pools, lakes, and oceans—can sometimes get contaminated with bacteria and viruses. Swimming in contaminated water can make you and your family sick. But you can take steps to stay safer while playing in the water.

To stay safer while playing in the water:

- Shower before and after going into a swimming pool.
- Stay out of the water if you've had diarrhea in the last two weeks to help protect others from infectious germs.
- Try not to swallow recreational water.
- Avoid swimming or playing near places where storm water is released on the beach.
- Stay out of the water for at least 24 hours after a storm.
- Always wash your hands before you eat or drink.