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Environmental Health Issues

Working towards a green and healthy home for every CHA resident by improving environmental health, wellbeing, and community resilience.

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Lead

EPA Lead-based Paint Awareness video

Lead is a serious toxin that is particularly harmful to children and pregnant people. People are exposed to lead from both indoor and outdoor sources: paint, drinking water, soil, dust, and cultural or consumer products, among others. Read more at the links below to protect your family and loved ones.

- [Actions to Reduce Lead Hazards](#) infographic - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- [Lead Poisoning Prevention](#) - Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)
- [Lead Poisoning Prevention](#) - Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH)
- [How to Reduce Lead Dust in Your Home](#) (IDPH)

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Indoor Air Quality

Overview of [Indoor Air Quality Pollutants and Sources](#) (IAQ - EPA)

- [Interactive Tour of the IAQ House](#)

By removing asthma triggers in our home, we can improve indoor air quality and reduce asthma symptoms in children and adults, decreasing hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and rescue medication use.

[Asthma Trigger](#) poster - American Lung Association

[Check your local outdoor air quality](#)

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Pests

Starve them out, dry them out, and keep them out!

Pests like insects and rodents have been around and won't go away soon – they can be found anywhere, even in the cleanest homes. The most effective way to reduce risks posed by both pests and pesticides is to keep pests away by not having food, water, or shelter available to them.

1. *Starve them out*

- Seal up boxes, bags, and other food containers
- Don't leave pet food bowls out overnight
- Clean up dirty dishes right away; keep a lid on trash containers
- Wipe up spills and crumbs

2. *Dry them out*

- Drain dish water from the sink
- Report [link or widget here] leaky faucets
- Empty standing water from flowerpots or sinks
- Wrap cold water lines with insulation to prevent condensation

3. *Keep them out*

- Seal up cracks and openings along baseboards, behind sinks, and around windows.
- Put screens over vents and pipes that open to the outside
- Seal spaces around corners and pipes

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Pesticides

Keep common pesticides out of children's reach:

- Bath and kitchen disinfectants and sanitizers, including bleach and bleach wipes
- Products used to kill mold and mildew
- Insect sprays, baits, and repellants
- Rat and other rodent poisons
- Weed killers
- Flea and tick shampoos, powders, and dips for pets

Poison-proof your home:

- Always **store pesticides and other chemicals out of a child's reach** – preferable in a locked cabinet. Including bleach wipes!
- **Read the label FIRST** – products, including household cleaning products and pet products can be dangerous or ineffective if too much or too little is used.
- Before applying pesticides or other household chemicals, **remove children, their toys, and pets from the area**. Keep children and pets away until the pesticide has dried or as long as recommended on the label
- **Keep pesticides in their original containers**. Children may associate some containers with food or drink (like soda bottles) and never place rodent or insect bait where small children can get to them.
- If your use of a pesticide or other household chemical is interrupted (like by a phone call), **reclose the container and remove it from the child's reach**. Use household products in child-resistant packaging.
- When applying insect repellents to children, **read all directions first**. Do not apply over cuts, wounds, or irritated skin. Do not apply to eyes, mouths, hands, or spray directly on the face. Use just enough to cover exposed skin and clothing.

- **Wash** children's hands, toys, and bottles/pacifiers often.
- Regularly **clean** floors, windowsills, and other surfaces to reduce exposure to harmful residues (often soap and water are sufficient).

Know the Poison Control Center number: (800) 222-1222

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Mold

Mold will grow on wet or damp surfaces – like basements, bathrooms, showers, and near plumbing fixtures. They reproduce by releasing tiny spores you can't see – when you breathe them in, they get into your lungs. Prolonged exposure can lead to reduced lung function. Some people are particularly sensitive to mold if they already have allergies.

- The key to mold control is moisture control, including humidity and sources of water (like leaking pipes).
- Dry water damaged areas and items within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.
- If mold is a problem, clean up the mold and get rid of excess water.
- Wash mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely. Absorbent materials (like carpets or ceiling tiles) that become moldy may have to be replaced.

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Report a Concern

Report environmental health hazards (mold/moisture, suspected lead-based paint or other lead hazards, asthma and allergy exacerbation, pest/pesticide issues, indoor smoking, water quality, etc.) to healthy_homes@thecha.org.