

Cleaning Product Safety

If you use cleaning products in the home, keep the following in mind. Household cleaning products may be unsafe when used and stored in a manner inconsistent with the directions on the label. Be sure to read and follow the label directions carefully, and if you have any questions, call the toll-free number found on most product labels. Here are some simple precautions to help prevent accidents from occurring:

Do...

- Use only as much cleaning product as is necessary for the job; properly store remaining product immediately. This will limit accessibility to children and help prevent accidental spills.
- Use low-toxic cleaning products whenever available. Be aware that even products labeled as 'safe' or 'natural' may contain ingredients that are toxins or irritants. Consider using alternatives to chemical cleaners such as lemon juice, washing soda, baking soda and vinegar.
- Read and follow label directions for proper use, storage and disposal of chemical cleaners.
- Store cleaning products in an area which is away from food and not accessible to young children or pets (preferably a locked cabinet and not under the sink).
- Store products in their original containers and keep the original label intact. Product use and storage, disposal instructions, precautions and first aid instructions vary according to their ingredients. It can be dangerous to use a product incorrectly or to follow the wrong emergency treatment guidelines.
- Keep buckets containing cleaning solutions out of reach of children and pets.
- Properly close all containers, especially those with child-resistant caps.

Don't...

- Don't mix cleaning products. Products which are safe when used alone can sometimes cause dangerous fumes if mixed with other products. For example, never mix products containing ammonia with products containing chlorine bleach.
- Don't reuse an empty household cleaning product container for any other purpose. The label instructions and precautions for the original product may be inaccurate or dangerous if used for a different product.
- Don't use products with strong fragrances or odors, they may aggravate allergy or asthma symptoms.

This fact sheet has been created for the H.E.L.P. for Kids Project.



CLEANING

Contaminants

Contaminants collect on carpeting and when they become moist. Young children often lie on upholstered furniture for long periods of time in their bedrooms. This is a major source of household contaminants.

Typical contaminants found in house dust include allergens, pesticides and other toxic chemicals. A common source of lead is old paint that deteriorates into paint chips, small particles and dust. Outdoor dust in the soil can include particles of paint peeling from your driveway, emissions from automobiles that used leaded gasoline, smelt from industrial or commercial facilities. The lead in the soil can be tracked into the home by shoes, bare feet, or by pets. Toddlers are most at risk from breathing contaminated dust because they play on floors and put their hands in their mouths.

The common allergens in our homes (animal dander, cockroach, mold/mildew and pollen) can cause serious problems for children with allergies and asthma. Allergens are easily stirred up into the air in every room of the home, making them difficult to avoid. In fact, many activities in your home can trigger an allergy or asthma attack, ranging from annoying to life threatening. In addition to common allergens, triggers include irritants (such as cigarette and wood smoke) and fragrances. Avoid products with strong fragrances. Finally,

Cleaning Reduces Contaminants

Cleaning is an important part of managing contaminants. Regular cleaning of places where pollutants are likely to collect and/or grow -- including basements and bedrooms -- will keep them from accumulating and causing symptoms, asthma symptoms and lead intake, especially in children.

Cleaning may stir up dust and other contaminants into the air around the person who is doing the cleaning. This can trigger a response in persons with allergies or asthma. Therefore, children and persons with allergies and asthma should leave areas where cleaning is taking place. If that is not possible the following advice may help reduce symptoms:

- ② Wear a high-efficiency or HEPA dust mask, swim goggles and gloves while cleaning.
- ② Clean in a well ventilated area (open windows and run exhaust fans), and leave the area after cleaning.
- ② Minimize the use of powdered or spray cleaners. If using a spray cleaning product, spray the cleaner on a cloth or sponge instead of on the surface being cleaned.
- ② Break cleaning into smaller tasks and spread them over several days to reduce exposure to allergens and triggers at any one time.
- ② After cleaning, change clothes and wash hands and any skin that was exposed during cleaning tasks.

Cleaning Suggestions

The following cleaning tips will help reduce dust, dirt, allergens and triggers in your home:

- ② Use doormats and/or area rugs at all entrances to catch dust, dirt and other tracked-in pollutants such as lead and pesticides. Vacuum or launder mats and rugs weekly.
- ② Dust hard surfaces with a cloth dampened with water or other non-toxic cleaner weekly. Dusting with a dry cloth will result in more airborne dust and may eventually scratch and dull the surface's finish.
- ② Hot water can increase the effectiveness of many cleaners (and mean that less product must be used)
- ② Keep kitchen food preparation surfaces clean and remove garbage regularly.
- ② Clean bathroom surfaces to reduce bacterial contamination and mold build-up.
- ② Keep household surfaces and textiles clean and dry because mold grows on materials contaminated with soil especially when moisture is present.
- ② Clean mold from hard surfaces such as showers, kitchen counters, walls, floors, etc. Using a mixture of 3/4 to 1-1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water. Remove and dispose of any porous material containing mold.
- ② Launder bedding and stuffed toys every 7 to 10 days in hot water to kill dust mites. Water temperature needs to be at least 130 degrees to kill dust mites. If your water temperature is lower due to scalding hazards for children (120 to 125 degrees is safer), options include washing bedding at a laundromat which does have hot water or using the hottest water available in the home. Also, dry bedding using the hot cycle.
- ② Blankets, synthetic pillows and comforters should be washed monthly in hot water or in a laundromat if top holes in washer are not visible when item is place in empty washer.
- ② Clean or replace furnace and air conditioning filters regularly (monthly for permanent filters, every 3 months for disposable filters). Consult with a heating and cooling specialist to determine if medium efficiency, pleated filters will work in your equipment.
- ② Launder curtains and clean blinds regularly.

- ② Clean dust and collected deposits off of refrigerator (back of refrigerators). Remove the grille and vacuum down coils using a damp cloth or sponge. Also, clean to reduce the growth of mold and mildew.
- ② Clean each room and closet well; dust and vacuum.
- ② Remove clutter (makes it easier to clean thoroughly)
- ② Use products with little or no fragrances (especially lot softeners).

NOTE: In homes with a suspected lead problem:

- ② Clean up paint chips immediately.
- ② Wet mop floors.
- ② Use a damp sponge or rag to remove paint dust from
- ② Store mops, rags, and buckets so they are inaccessible

Vacuuming



Regular and thorough vacuuming is very important to remove dust mites, pollen and pet dander that collect in carpets. They pick up 2 to 6 times as much dust as nozzles. Non-powered attachments are useful for

- ② Vacuum carpeted areas at least once a week or during allergy season (vacuum daily in the fall)
- ② Vacuum upholstered furniture, blinds and drapery (child cares).
- ② Vacuum against the carpet's nap, taking at least 2 passes.
- ② Empty the dirt collection bag when it's 1/2 to 2/3 full. Suction power is decreased and the vacuum is less effective outdoors to reduce released dust.

Ordinary paper vacuum bags can pass as much as 50% of the dust, mold and bacteria back into the air where they can be inhaled. Use a vacuum with a high efficiency filtration system. HEPA filters can capture 75% - 95% of all fine particles. Microfiltration or ULPA filters are available for most upright and canister style vacuum cleaners.

85% of the soil and dust tracked onto carpeting is dry and recaptured by the vacuum. However, even with thorough vacuuming, hot water extraction is needed to remove the 15% of soil which is the oily type material. Hot water extraction should be performed about once per year with a low pH product. However, make sure the carpeting dries fully within 24 hours. Using fans and opening windows will accelerate drying.