

Your Health and the Environment

What are some words you think of when you hear the terms “health” and “wellness”? Maybe you thought of words like “nutrition”, “weight management”, “screenings”, “running”, and “vaccines”. Rarely do we think of the word “environment”. However, environmental wellness is considered to be a pillar of wellness and other areas of our health and wellbeing thrive when we take care of our environment.



While we can't always control where we work, play and live, we can make small steps to keep our surrounding environment healthier by limiting exposure to certain substances, toxins and allergy-inducing matter.

Indoor air

Air pollution doesn't just exist outside. The air indoors can become polluted just like outdoor air. To keep your indoor air safer:

- Be mindful when using chemical cleaners, paints, pesticides and glue
- Don't delay changing the filters in your heating and cooling systems
- Cease smoking in your home
- Treat asbestos and mold immediately if discovered in your home

Carbon Monoxide

When inhaling even small amounts of carbon monoxide, a person can experience the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning which include flu like symptoms, blurred vision, stomach aches, trouble breathing, sleepiness and ringing in the ears. Common causes of carbon monoxide include broken gas water heaters and furnaces, space heaters that are not well ventilated, gas clothes dryers, tobacco smoke and fuels burned in wood and gas stoves. Make sure you have a carbon monoxide detector installed in your home.

Indoor Allergy and Asthma Triggers

Indoor allergens can generate from mold, cockroaches, pets and dust mites. If you have asthma, prepare your home to reduce your exposure to allergens and asthma triggers by:

- Removing stuffed animals, rugs, curtains and lampshades from well-occupied rooms, like your bedroom
- Consider plastic mattress and pillow covers
- Hire an exterminator if you suspect an infestation
- Use air conditions and air filters to lessen pollen from coming into your home

Radon

Radon is a gas that comes from rock, soil and water under homes; it is odorless and cannot be seen. The gas will move into a home from the ground through cracks and holes in the home. Why is radon a concern for your health? As radon breaks down it creates radioactive particles which can damage the lungs and may cause lung cancer from long term exposure. If your home has a basement you should get your home tested for radon, but it is recommended all homes get tested. Testing is the only effective way to find out if you have a radon problem.

Remember, taking small steps to take care of your environmental health will strengthen your overall wellbeing. Think of one or two things you can change to make for a healthier environment at home. Ask yourself: How will your overall wellness benefit from making changes to your environmental health?

For information on asthma and allergies visit www.pebtf.org, click the "Get Healthy" logo and select "MyActiveHealth". You can find out more information on your health and the environment from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.