



Healthy Homes: Keeping Homes Healthy and Safe for Children

Use this guide to identify and fix
health hazards in your home.



Lead

Lead is a poison often found in old paint. Lead paint, and the dust that it turns into, is the most common cause of childhood lead poisoning in New York City (NYC). Buildings built before 1960 may still have lead paint on the walls, windows, windowsills, doors and other surfaces. Lead can also be found in some consumer products, and in some soil and plumbing. Lead poisoning can cause learning and behavior problems in children, and problems during pregnancy and other health issues in adults (e.g., high blood pressure, neurological and kidney problems, infertility and impotence).

To protect your child from lead poisoning:

- Remind your doctor to test your child for lead poisoning at ages 1 year and 2 years. Ask about testing older children.
- Report peeling paint to your landlord. Call **311** if the problem isn't fixed or if you think repair work is being done unsafely.
- Wash floors, windowsills, hands, toys and pacifiers often.
- Avoid using products known to contain lead. Some products from other countries—such as health remedies, foods, spices, toys, ceramics, cosmetics and religious powders—can contain lead, even if lead is not listed on the product packaging. For more information, visit **nyc.gov/hazardousproducts**.
- Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. Run the water for at least 30 seconds, until it is noticeably colder, before using it.
Call **311** to get a free lead test kit for drinking water.

For more information, visit **nyc.gov/lead**.





Pests

Pests such as cockroaches and mice can make asthma symptoms worse or trigger asthma attacks.

To control pests in your home:

- Report water leaks, cracks, holes and pests to your landlord or superintendent. Call **311** if the problem isn't fixed.
- Keep food in sealed containers.
- Get rid of clutter, such as cardboard boxes, newspapers and paper bags.
- Use garbage cans with tight-fitting lids, and take garbage and recycling out every day.
- Tie up garbage bags before putting them in compactor chutes.
- Use traps for mice and bait stations and gel for cockroaches and ants.
- Never use illegal pesticides such as Tres Pasitos, Chinese Chalk or Tempo.
- Never use foggers, bombs or loose rodent bait.



Mold

Mold and mildew can cause allergic reactions and can make asthma symptoms worse or trigger asthma attacks.

To protect your family from mold and mildew:

- Ventilate damp areas (e.g., bathroom, kitchen) by opening a window or running a fan while showering or cooking.
- Report all plumbing leaks and moisture problems to your landlord or superintendent. Call **311** if the problem isn't fixed.
- If possible, block off moldy areas until they are cleaned or fixed, and keep children and pets away.
- Use a dehumidifier to lower humidity levels in your home.



Tobacco Smoke

Secondhand smoke is dangerous. It causes cancer, heart disease and other illnesses in both smokers and nonsmokers. It also increases the risk of asthma in children and can make asthma symptoms worse or trigger asthma attacks.

To protect your child from secondhand smoke:

- Quit smoking. For help quitting, call **311** or visit **nyc.gov** and search for **quit smoking**.
- Do not allow smoking inside your home. Smoking in a separate room or near an open window, fan or air conditioner does not protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke.





Safety Hazards

Everyday items such as medications and cleaning products can become safety hazards when left in a child's reach. Other safety hazards include carbon monoxide leaks from broken furnaces and windows without window guards.

To protect your child from safety hazards:

- Make sure window guards are properly installed if a child under age 11 lives with you. Report any missing window guards to your landlord. Call **311** if the problem isn't fixed.
- Make sure smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed in your home. Change the batteries in the spring and the fall when changing clocks for daylight saving time.
- Keep a working fire extinguisher in your home.
- Keep medication, cleaning products and other chemicals out of your child's reach (e.g., up high in a cabinet or in a cabinet or drawer with a safety latch).
- Save the phone number for the NYC Poison Control Center in your cell phone: **212-POISONS (212-764-7667)**. Call the NYC Poison Control Center for guidance on treating possible poisonings and with questions about medicine safety, plants and household products.



Keeping children healthy and safe starts at home.

For more information, call **311** or visit
nyc.gov/health and search for **healthy homes**.

