
12 WAYS

TO A
HEALTHY HOME



NEW HAMPSHIRE
DHHS
DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Some health problems for children and adults may start in the home. Even when we want to keep our families safe and healthy, it is hard to know what steps to take to do so. In addition to the information in this booklet, below are a few additional resources that can provide you with more information and assistance for your family. Look on the back cover for the contact information of each program.

211 NH

- Dial 2-1-1 from anywhere in NH for free, confidential, person-to-person assistance finding health and human services.
- Available 24/7 with translation assistance in over 150 languages.

New Hampshire 2-1-1
Dial 2-1-1

HEALTHY MOMS/BABIES

- Home visiting services for families from pregnancy to a child's 18th birthday.
- Parenting support & child health and developmental screenings.

Maternal & Child Health
1-603-271-4517



HEALTH INSURANCE

- Health coverage pays for provider services, medications, and hospital care.
- Insurance plans can differ by how much you pay and the services that are covered.

www.coveringnewhampshire.org
1-800-318-2596

LEGAL HELP

- New Hampshire Legal Aid is a group of agencies who provide a range of legal services to low income families in the state.

NH Legal Aid
1-800-639-5290

NH Legal Assistance
1-800-562-3174

12 Ways to a Healthy Home

This booklet was created by the New Hampshire Healthy Homes Committee to share information on hazards that exist in homes and how they can impact you and your family's health. It was updated in May 2024.

We hope it will help you find resources, tips, and more information on ways to provide a healthier home for you and your family!

Contents:



Lead



Drinking Water



Tobacco Smoke



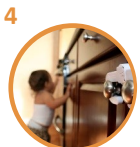
Rodents & Insects



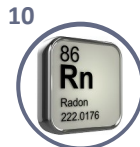
Asthma



Fire



Injury



Radon



Carbon Monoxide



Bed Bugs



Moisture & Mold



Weatherization



LEAD



1

Lead can be found in dust, paint, soil, drinking water, and in a variety of household objects. If your home was built before 1978, it may also contain lead paint. Everyday activities, such as opening and closing lead-painted windows or performing common household renovations and repairs,

may generate lead dust. If lead dust is ingested or inhaled, even in very small amounts, it can be a serious health risk, especially for young children and pregnant women.

A minimum of 32,350 young children in NH are living in older homes with lead paint.

WHAT TO DO

- **Test all one- and two-year-olds for lead.**
- **Hire a licensed lead inspector** to find out if your home has lead hazards.
- **Use an EPA “RRP Certified” (Renovate, Repair, Paint) contractor** who understands how to use lead-safe work practices when renovating or repairing your home.
- **Regularly wash** hands, toys, bottles, pacifiers, floors, windowsills and other areas where leaded dust may settle.
- **Be careful that you don’t bring home lead** from your job site or hobby.



Tobacco Smoke

is produced when people smoke tobacco products.

Second-hand tobacco smoke can be inhaled by those nearby. There is no safe level of exposure to this smoke. *Third-hand tobacco smoke* is the poisons and particles left behind on surfaces like carpets, clothes, and

furniture after someone smokes. Children and pets often spend time in places where third-hand smoke settles. *Electronic nicotine devices*, like e-cigarettes, increase blood pressure, impact heart & breathing rates, and contain toxic chemicals.

2



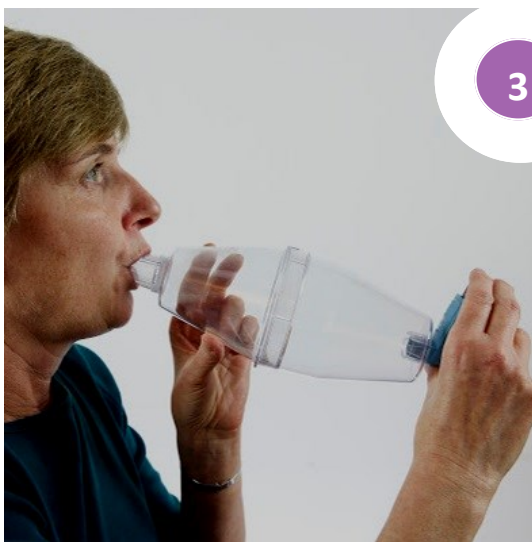
1,900 adults in New Hampshire die annually from smoking.

WHAT TO DO

- **Until you quit, choose to smoke outside.** Family, friends and visitors should never smoke or use e-cigarettes or vaping products in your home.
- **Keep yourself and your children away from places where smoking is allowed.** Tobacco smoke can cause severe health issues in children, especially in children with respiratory conditions.
- **Nicotine can be fatal to adults and children.** In case of a liquid nicotine exposure, call the Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222**. Always keep nicotine products away from children and pets.
- **Ask your doctor for ways to quit smoking.** Call the NH Tobacco Helpline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** for ways to help quit tobacco and other electronic nicotine devices.



TOBACCO SMOKE



3

Asthma is a condition in which the airways become swollen, resulting in wheezing, coughing, or chest tightness. Tobacco smoke, moisture, mold, pets, rodents, and insects in your home can trigger an attack. Know the common asthma triggers and ways to avoid them.

12% of New Hampshire residents have asthma. The “spacer” pictured above is a helpful tool used to deliver asthma medication.

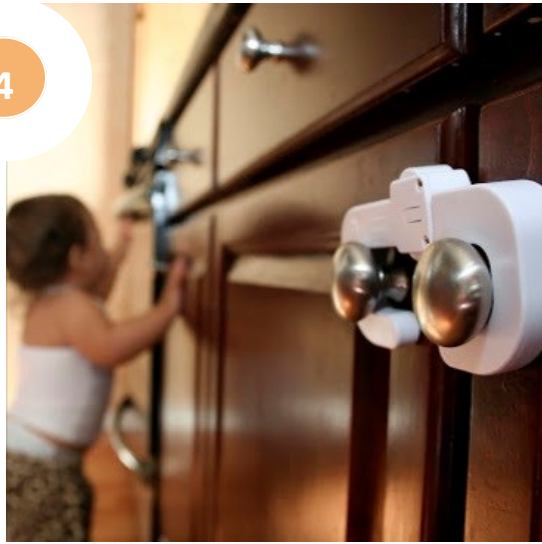
WHAT TO DO

- **Know your triggers.** Avoid tobacco smoke, mold, and rodents (see sections on *Tobacco Smoke*, *Moisture & Mold*, and *Rodents & Insects*). Take steps to prevent exposure to them.
- **Wash bedding in hot water.** Use hypoallergenic mattress and pillow covers.
- **Clean surfaces and floors regularly** with a wet or microfiber cloth. Use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum for carpets and furniture.
- **Keep pets out of the bedroom.** Pet dander can increase symptoms.
- **Have an Asthma Action Plan.** Work with your health care provider to develop a written Asthma Management Plan.
- **Know your medicines** and symptoms.
- **Get a flu shot.** People with asthma are at high risk for complications from flu. Flu can trigger asthma attacks, worsen asthma symptoms, and lead to pneumonia.



Injuries can occur when children near appliances, bathtubs, and stairs are not monitored or medicine and cleaners are not stored safely. To prevent falls and poisonings, closely monitor your children, older adults, and other family members.

4



Accidental Injury is the leading cause of death in NH in people 1 to 9 years of age and 15 to 44 years of age.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install grab bars** and use non-slip mats in the tub and shower.
- **Install lighting** over stairs, steps, and on landings.
- **Keep stairs clear.** Avoid excessive clutter in and around your home to avoid falls.
- **Never let children jump** on beds or climb on furniture.
- **Keep beds, cribs, and other furniture away** from windows.
- **To avoid scalds,** set the thermostat on your water heater to 120° F or lower.
- **Prevent poisonings** by moving medications, alcohol, cleaning products, bug killers, fertilizers, and fuels into locked cupboards out of reach of children and pets.
- **Keep the phone number** for the Northern New England Poison Control Center handy (800-222-1222).



INJURY

12 WAYS TO A HEALTHY HOME



5

Carbon Monoxide

(CO) is an invisible, odorless, and deadly gas. It is created when heating fuels burn incompletely. Heating & cooking equipment, generators, and vehicles running in attached garages can be sources of CO.

Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce symptoms that mimic the flu. Low doses over time or large amounts at once can be fatal.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install CO alarms** on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas. Test these alarms MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries.** Models with removable batteries should have them replaced twice a year. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Fuel-burning appliances** should be installed by a licensed professional. These include any that use wood, gas, oil, pellets, and coal. Never heat your house with an oven.
- **Know the signs of CO poisoning.** If you suspect CO poisoning, leave your home immediately and call 911.
- **Generators, charcoal grills, gasoline-powered devices, and any unvented heating sources** should be kept 20 feet from the house. They should never be used near or in the house or garage.





6

Mold can grow on almost anything when there's too much moisture. Fixing leaks and controlling dampness is the most important way to prevent mold growth.

Moisture creates a good environment for bacteria, cockroaches, and dust mites, which can cause allergy and asthma symptoms.

WHAT TO DO

- **Fix plumbing and roof leaks** as soon as possible.
- **Dry all wet areas as soon as possible!** The longer it's there, the more damage it will do. Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely.
- **Know when you can clean it yourself.** If the area affected is more than 3 x 3 feet, locate a professional at these websites:
 - ACAC.org
 - IICRC.org
- **Increase ventilation** when cooking and showering. If there is no fan, open the window.
- **Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier** in the summer to reduce humidity. Keep the relative humidity in your home between 40% and 60%.
- **Clean and maintain** air conditioners and dehumidifiers at least monthly.





7

Water from a private well can contain arsenic, radon, and other contaminants linked to cancer and serious illnesses. Many contaminants have no taste, odor, or color. Unlike private wells, water that comes from the town or city is regularly tested. It is

important to test your well water frequently for contaminants that can impact your health.

1 in 5 residential wells in New Hampshire contains arsenic, a poisonous chemical that can cause bladder cancer.

WHAT TO DO

- **Know what's in your water.** Test your well water every year for bacteria and nitrates. Test every 3 to 5 years for the state recommended "Standard Analysis."
- **Protect the area around your well from contamination.** Keep the area around your well clean and chemical free. Fertilizers, animal waste, fuel, and oil from parked cars, lawn equipment and recreational vehicles can get into the ground and contaminate your well.
- **Drink & cook with bottled water if your well is contaminated.** Use bottled water or have a qualified technician install a treatment system.





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Rodents & insects need

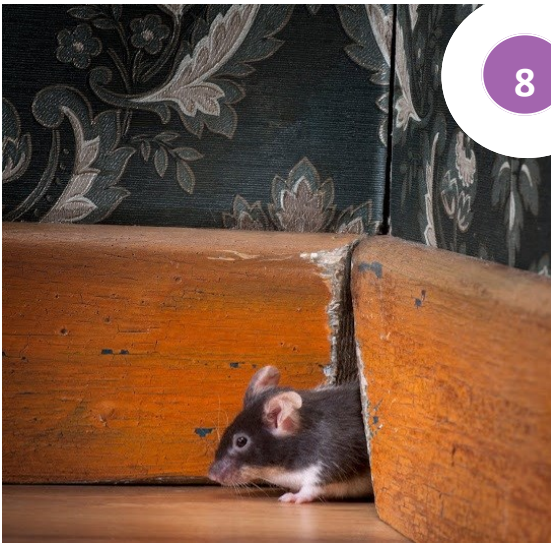
food, water, shelter, and a way to enter in order to survive in your house. Aside from being pests, rodents and insects can be an asthma trigger. Instead of depending on pesticides, which contain poisonous

chemicals, good pest control requires monitoring, cleaning up, and shutting pests out of the home.

A mouse can fit through a hole the size of a dime.

WHAT TO DO

- **Secure food.** Put a tight lid on your garbage can; put food away and wash dirty dishes daily; put pet food away at night.
- **Remove water sources** like plumbing leaks, pet water bowls, and a wet dish drying rack.
- **Clean up.** Regularly wash counter surfaces and clean cooking appliances like the oven and toaster.
- **Seal cracks and crevices** where pests can enter your home.
- **Choose safer “greener” pest control products.** Place all pesticides out of the reach of children.





9

Fires are preventable. Properly install and maintain your smoke alarms. Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family. Watch out for electrical, kitchen, and home hazards that can make your home more prone to fires and related injuries.

A majority of fire deaths occur in homes that have no working smoke alarms.

WHAT TO DO

- **Install smoke alarms** on every level of your home, in every bedroom, and outside sleeping areas, including the basement. Test them all MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries.** Models with removable batteries should have them replaced twice a year. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Alarms lose their sensitivity** and should be replaced every 10 years.
- **Keep a 3-foot clear zone** around fireplaces, wood stoves, and any heating device or equipment.
- **Develop and practice an escape plan** with family members. Be sure your escape routes are free of clutter.





10



Radon is an invisible, odorless, radioactive gas that

comes from soil and bedrock, including granite. It can enter your home through cracks in the foundation or from your water supply. Over time, exposure to radon can lead to illness and even cancer. Radon is the second leading

cause of lung cancer in New Hampshire. Radon test kits are simple to use. Test your home today and know the risk of radon.

A radon mitigation system, as pictured above, can be used to vent radon gas out of your home.

WHAT TO DO

- **Test your home for radon.** Many easy-to-use test kits are less than \$20. Test kits are available at local hardware stores and online. If you are a resident of New Hampshire, free radon test kits are available from the [NH Radon Program](#).
- **Be sure to test before and after home renovations,** or before the purchase of a new home. In new construction test before the building is complete.
- **Seal floors and cracks** to prevent radon from entering your home and living space.
- **If the radon level is 4 picocuries per liter or higher** in the lowest livable space of your home, hire a qualified radon mitigation contractor.





Bed Bugs do not carry disease, but they do feed exclusively on blood once every 5 to 10 days. They are successful hitchhikers, moving from an infested site to furniture, bedding, boxes, and clothing. They multiply at an incredibly rapid pace.

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In six months, one bed bug can multiply to over 30,000 bugs.

WHAT TO DO

- **Contact a pest professional or your landlord** immediately. Do NOT treat the situation yourself. If your landlord is not responsive, contact your local code or health officer.
- **Vacuum your mattress, box spring, headboard & floors daily.** Empty the vacuum into a sealed plastic bag and take it outside.
- **Use mattress encasements and Climbups®** to cover the mattress, box spring, and feet of your bed.
- **Do NOT change where you sleep.** Make your bed an “island” by pulling the bed away from the wall. Do not let the bedding touch the floor and remove clutter around and under the bed.
- **Heat clothing and bedding** in the dryer for 20 minutes on high heat to kill bed bugs. Seal the items in plastic bags until after treatment.
- **Don’t spread the contamination.** Write “BED BUG INFESTED” on items you are throwing away.



12

Weatherization

helps families reduce their energy bills by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. Low-income families are the most vulnerable to rising fuel costs. Money not spent on energy bills can be used for other necessities, like food and medication.



Make sure your heating system receives professional maintenance each year.

WHAT TO DO

- **Seal holes, cracks, and gaps** throughout your home to prevent air leaks.
- **It takes energy to heat water.** Reduce your water use by only washing full loads of dishes and clothes. Take shorter showers instead of baths. Replace sink and shower fixtures with low flow nozzles and showerheads.
- **Central air conditioning.** For every degree warmer you set it, you will shave 3 to 4 percent from your electric bill for cooling.
- **Install a programmable thermostat** that turns down the heat during the day while you are away.



Finding Resources That Can Help You and Your Family

Asthma	603-271-4501	dhhs.nh.gov/asthma
Bed Bugs	Dial 2-1-1	epa.gov/bedbugs
Carbon Monoxide	Dial 911	https://bit.ly/usfa-co
Disability Rights Center - NH	800-834-1721	drcnh.org
Drinking Water	603-271-2513	www.des.nh.gov/water/drinking-water/private-wells
Environmental Health	603-271-9542	dhhs.nh.gov/epht
Fire Safety	Dial 911	https://bit.ly/nh-fire-safe Call your local Fire Dept.
Injuries	877-783-0432	https://bit.ly/nh-injury
Lead	800-897-5323	www.DHHS.NH.Gov/LeadInfo
Maternal & Child Health/ Home Visiting	603-271-4517	www.dhhs.nh.gov/mch
Moisture & Mold	603-271-3468	https://bit.ly/nh-mold
NH Health Insurance Marketplace	800-318-2596	coveringnewhampshire.org
NH Housing Grant for Lead	800-640-7239	nhhfa.org
NH Legal Assistance	800-562-3174	nhla.org
Pests		https://bit.ly/nh-pest
Mosquitos	603-271-4496	dhhs.nh.gov/mosquito
Poison Center	800-222-1222	nnepc.org
Radon	603-271-1708	dhhs.nh.gov/radon
Rodents	877-398-4769	https://bit.ly/nh-rodent
Substance Abuse	Dial 2-1-1	thedoortway.nh.gov
Tobacco	800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)	dhhs.nh.gov/tobacco
Weatherization Assistance Program NH Department of Energy	603-271-3670	https://bit.ly/nh-weatherization-assist

Call or visit these websites for more information on Healthy Homes