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HEALTHY HOMES



COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR HEALTHIER HOMES

Providing information for a
healthier living environment

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Allergies or Asthma?

As Spring arrives, pollen-covered cars and sidewalks, oak leaves, and blustery winds combine to cause some uncomfortable symptoms for allergy and asthma sufferers.

How do you know if your “allergies” are just that, or something more serious, like asthma? An allergy is an abnormal reaction by your body to things to which you are sensitized. The things that cause the allergies are “allergens”. Allergies can cause many different symptoms (cough, wheezing, itchy/watery eyes, itchy/runny nose, eczema or rough skin, hives, headache, shortness of breath, diarrhea, stomach cramps, dark circles under and around your eyes). These allergens can come from things you eat, swallow or breathe in. You can be mildly or severely allergic.¹

Asthma is a chronic disease that inflames and narrows the airways, which causes less air to flow into the lungs. In addition to wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing, there can be a feeling of chest tightness. More than 22 million people in the United States are known to have asthma, nearly 6 million of these who are children.

Every person with asthma should work with their healthcare provider to develop an asthma plan. When people with asthma also have allergies, their asthma may often be worse. They should know what their allergies are, have a plan to avoid the things that trigger attacks, take their medications as prescribed, and always follow their asthma plan.²

Now is the time to do what you can to prevent the spring-time triggers, like pollen, from causing or worsening problems.

- Keep windows and doors closed when the pollen count is high and plan indoor activities.
- Dust frequently with damp cloths. Wear a N95 mask (available at hardware stores) or cover nose and mouth with a strip of clean cotton as you dust.
- If the pollen count is high, change your clothes and shower when you come inside.
- If you have a pet, keep it clean and brushed and have someone else do it, if possible.
- Keep your house, particularly bedrooms free of clutter that can collect dust.
- Keep the relative humidity in your house below 50%. Dust mites thrive in high humidity.³

^{1,3} Canadian Lung Association, 4/1/09 “Asthma—Allergies and Asthma”, www.lung.ca/diseases, March 2011

² National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health, <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>, March 2011



HAS YOUR HOME BECOME A LABORATORY?

THINK TWICE ABOUT MIXING CLEANING PRODUCTS

A press release from The Soap and Detergent Association (SDA) strongly cautions consumers about mixing cleaning products for use at home. According to a survey (www.cleaning101.com), 28% of Americans say they have mixed their own cleaning products at home. Why?

The most important reason—they felt it was safer to know what was in the products. Thirty-eight percent believed their “mix” would be cheaper and 28% felt it would be more effective.



Nancy Bock, SDA Vice President of Education, says, “There can be serious safety implications if proper care is not taken. In the frantic haste of emergency, will the person who made the mix-at-home product be able to tell a Poison Control Center what it contained?” Consider children who swallow liquids or skin burns from some cleaners.

What you need to know before mixing your own concoctions:

- Homemade cleaning products aren’t always stored in properly labeled containers. No one else will know what is actually contained without a label and safety instructions.
- Testing standards are rigorous for products during research, development, and testing well before products hit the store shelves. Homemade cleaners are not tested or held to any standards.
- If an ingredient is labeled “natural” that doesn’t necessarily mean it is safe if ingested by children or pets.
- Untested mixtures may have unforeseen consequences, such as damaging kitchen counters, furniture, clothing, etc.
- Formulated products come with safety and precautionary language and reminders about safe and secure storage and handling. Many are fitted with child resistant packaging.
- Mixing what may be otherwise harmless ingredients can create chemical reactions resulting in a mixture that can cause harm to users.



POISON PREVENTION IS NO ACCIDENT! PROPER STORAGE AND USE OF CLEANING PRODUCTS IS IMPORTANT:

- Close cleaning product caps securely. Even child-resistant packaging doesn’t work if the container is not properly closed.
- Lock up products. Store them in a location away from children, pets, and food. Install child-resistant locks on cabinets and doors.
- Keep cleaning products in their original containers. If an accident occurs, the label provides information about the contents and advice on immediate first-aid.
- Carefully dispose of empty cleaning containers. Replace the caps and discard in sealed recycling bins or garbage containers that are safe from curious children and pets.

If there is a poison related emergency, contact the nationwide toll-free:

POISON CONTROL CENTER
1-800-222-1222

Post this number by every phone in your home and add the number to your cell phone.

For more specific information online for consumers on the safe, beneficial, and proper use of cleaning products, visit: www.cleaning101.com/health & www.cleaning101.com/environment/facts/.

LEAD EXPOSURE CAN EFFECT PREGNANCY & UNBORN BABIES

Even small amounts of lead can be harmful to adults, children, and unborn babies.

Swallowing or breathing in lead is how children and adults are exposed, but unborn babies are also affected by lead.



Pregnant and recently exposed to lead—what happens?

- Lead enters the woman's bloodstream and goes through the placenta, which provides the baby with food and oxygen.
- Lead then goes into the unborn baby's bones and organs, including the brain.

Past exposure to lead and newly pregnant—what happens?

- Lead enters the woman's bloodstream and some of it gets stored in her bones.
- During pregnancy, the body releases minerals and lead that are stored in the bones.
- The lead goes through the placenta to the baby.
- Lead then goes into the unborn baby's bones and organs, including the brain.

What are possible effects of lead exposure in pregnancy?

- **Miscarriage or stillbirth**
- **Premature birth**
- **Babies born with a small size and low birth weight**
- **Learning and behavior problems that show up later in children**

If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy and think you may have been exposed to lead, talk to your health care provider about testing.

Reduce your risk of exposure.

- **Eat healthy!** Eating foods rich in calcium, iron, and vitamin C may help your body absorb less lead. Good sources are milk, iron-fortified cereal, leafy green vegetables, meat, and oranges.
- **DUST!** Dust often and use a damp cloth to avoid scattering dust.
- Wash hands often after cleaning and before handling food or eating.
- Store food in proper containers—never cans with lead seams or lead-glazed pottery. Don't drink hot beverages from ceramic mugs unless you are unsure the glaze is lead-free. Don't drink from or store beverages in leaded crystal containers.
- If a household member works with lead, make sure they shower and change clothes before coming inside the house, hugging others, or placing work clothes in a common hamper. Wash these work clothes separately.
- Always follow safety guidelines at work to protect yourself if your job exposes you to lead. Let your supervisor know right away if you are pregnant or planning pregnancy.
- Some hobbies may expose you to lead, like refinishing furniture. Be sure to read labels on arts and crafts materials to be sure they don't contain lead and avoid these if possible while pregnant.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency

HOW DOES MERCURY EXPOSURE AFFECT OUR HEALTH?



If you are an adult in your early 30s and older, you have probably had your temperature taken by a thermometer that contained mercury. Other common household items that contain mercury are thermostats, fluorescent lamps, and appliance switches. Unless these items get broken, there is usually no danger of exposure. Mercury is a naturally occurring metal and can be found in streams, lakes, and oceans. Some small plants and tiny animals in the water take up mercury from the water and mud at the bottom. When other fish eat these, they are also taking in the mercury. It builds up over time. Large fish take in the most mercury.

While mercury can be absorbed through the air we breathe or through our skin when a spill occurs, like when a mercury thermometer is broken, most people take in mercury through eating fish. But fish is a healthy part of our diet, right? Yes! We can safely eat fish, which has many nutritional benefits, but there are some tips to ensuring you limit how much mercury you take in from fish consumption.

Since pregnant women, women who may become pregnant, women who breast feed, and young children are the most at risk, they should pay particular attention to the guidelines. Mercury can pass from a pregnant woman to the unborn child. Exposure to high levels of mercury can damage the brain, kidneys, lungs, and in some instances, cause death.

TIPS FOR SAFELY EATING FISH

- Avoid eating shark, swordfish, tilefish, or King mackerel.
- Adults should eat no more than 12 ounces of fish or shellfish per week.
- Young children should eat no more than 6 ounces of fish or shellfish per week.
- Do not eat the same type of fish or shellfish two times in the same week.
- Eat no more than 6 ounces of albacore tuna in one week. It has more mercury than light tuna.
- Eat fish or shellfish with low-mercury content most often:
shrimp, pollock, salmon, catfish, canned light tuna

The Florida Department of Health provides printed guidelines about eating fish and shellfish which is available at: <http://doh.state.fl.us/floridafishadvice/index.html>. Wallet cards for pregnant or nursing women are available for printing.

There are other sources of mercury that can cause exposure to people. Some necklaces imported from Mexico that contain glass pendants have been shown to contain mercury. If these pendants are broken, they release metallic mercury to the environment.

Dental amalgam used to fill or restore teeth is made up of approximately 40-50% mercury, 25% silver, and 25-35% of a mixture of copper, zinc, and tin. Amalgam use is declining because of the decreasing incidence in dental decay and because improved substitute materials are now available for some applications. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that there is little evidence that the health of the vast majority of people with dental amalgam is compromised or that removing these amalgam fillings has a beneficial effect.

There is some use of mercury in ethnic folk medicine and for religious practices, and these cause a risk to exposure. Metallic mercury is sold under the name of "AZOGUE" in stores (sometimes called botanicas).

Short-term exposure to high levels of mercury vapor can cause coughing, chest pain, increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, skin rashes, and eye irritation.

If you think you have been exposed to mercury, call your doctor or the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222).

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Florida Department of Health, Environmental Protection Agency



**PROTECT
YOUR FAMILY!**

**PROTECT
YOUR BUYERS!**

Help ensure the
purchase of a healthy home.

If you are buying or selling a
pre-1978 home, have the home
tested for lead as
a condition of purchase!

**Lead From Paint, Dust, and Soil Can Be Dangerous If
Not Managed Properly**

FACT: Lead exposure can harm young children and babies, even before they are born.

FACT: Even children who seem healthy can have high levels of lead in their bodies.

FACT: People can get lead in their bodies by breathing or swallowing lead dust, or by ingesting soil or paint chips containing lead.

FACT: People have many options for reducing lead hazards. In most cases, lead-based paint that is in good condition is not a hazard.

FACT: Removing lead-based paint improperly can increase the danger to those living in the home.

If you think a home might have lead hazards, having lead-hazard inspections prior to purchase or closing may save you or your clients mitigation fees and potential health conditions, particularly in children. If renovations or additions are planned, the potential to disturb intact lead-based paint is greatly increased. Lead-hazard inspections are not disruptive or time-consuming.

Call our Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention office to schedule inspections. (813) 307-8015, ext. 7112 or 7108
www.hillscountyhealth.org/healthpromo/lead.htm

**Hillsborough County
Health Department
Lead-Hazard Inspection fees:**

**Lead Risk Assessment & Targeted
Lead-Based Paint Inspection:**

Under 1,200 square feet	\$250.00
1,200 - 1,999 square feet	\$350.00
Rehab with costs up to \$5000.00	\$150.00

Lead Hazard Screen	\$150.00
Lead Paint Clearance	\$125.00

Environmental Sampling fees:

Dust wipes	\$ 25.00
Paint sampling	\$ 25.00
Soil sampling	\$ 25.00



Join the
**Lead Alert
Network**

**AUTOMATIC
E-MAIL
NOTIFICATION**
of recalled toys
and other products.

When official
alerts are issued,
you'll receive an
e-mail with
information &
photos.

Visit: www.hillscountyhealth.org
Community Health
Lead program
& look for "Lead Alerts"
or e-mail us at:
Hills_chd_lead_alert@doh.state.fl.

*This includes
recalls for
safety issues &
other hazardous
materials.*



Looking for a great tool to educate and learn about home safety hazards? Tour each room of an interactive house at Home Safety Council's website.
<http://www.mysafefhome.net/>

ESHI—ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY & HEALTH INSTITUTE

Now provides Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) training nationwide.

ESHI has 16 years of experience in providing asbestos, lead, and hazardous materials seminars. Their environmental scientists have extensive experience with lead-based paint.

Currently partnering with Home Builder Association, Apartment Association, Electrical Council of Florida, Florida Building & Materials Association, Associated Building Contractors, and ALLPRO Corporation

ESHI training advantages:

- Interactive training from experienced trainers
- Covers potential liability to Certified Renovators & firms
- Covers insurance requirements
- Newsletter updates for any regulation changes
- Instructors available for consultation
- Course package includes required forms and caution signs

Class approved by Florida Construction Industry Licensing Board for 7.5 CEU points in Florida only. ESHI provider #0001350 Course #0608492 Effective 3/9/2010

Contact James Rizk, CIH, FLAC for more information (813) 626-8156

no-cost training

**OPPORTUNITIES:
CALL (813) 307-8071 FOR FULL INFORMATION.**

**HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS AND STAFF
*at your office:***

“LEAD SCREENING GUIDELINES AND PROTOCOLS”

**By request
Call (813) 307- 8015 Ext. 7112, 7108, or 7105**

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**“How to Have a Healthy Home”
*Call 307-8015 ext. 7112 or 7108
for class schedule and location.***

If you are interested in partnering with many other community businesses, agencies, organizations, and committed individuals in working to ensure our community and homes are healthy places to live,

**join the more than 60 other groups
who are currently collaborating.**

**Community Partners for Healthy Homes
(813) 307- 8015, ext. 7108
*Educational opportunities are offered.***

**Free Home Hazards Identification Training
and
New Home-Buyer Education
scheduled for groups upon request.
(813) 307-8071**



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Managing Editors:
Cynthia Keeton
Cindy Hardy