

Growing in a healthy place.

## Environmental Health:

Pollution can affect your child's health.

**M**ost people spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. While this may seem safe, there are a number of pollution problems that can affect your home environment and have health and safety repercussions for your family.

**What:** Lead is a metal found in materials used in and outside the home.

**Effect:** About three million children in the US suffer permanent neurological damage caused by lead poisoning. Effects include coma, seizure, convulsions, profound mental retardation and learning disabilities. Young children are especially at risk because between the ages of 12 and 36 months children have a lot of hand to mouth activity. They are likely to put their hands on lead if it is in their homes.

**Where found:** Lead is found most in older homes where old paint contains lead, or in drinking water that's run through older pipes with lead in them. Over 80 percent of homes built before 1978 have lead-based paint in them.

**Dealing with it:** Have a free check of your child's lead levels at your local health department. Have lead paint and pipes removed or adequately sealed to prevent exposure to the lead.

**What:** Asbestos is a heat resistant material found in building materials.

**Effect:** It's been linked with cancer and is no longer used in buildings. If it becomes airborne, through the material being ripped, it can be inhaled and cause lung cancer.

**Where found:** Asbestos was used in heating systems, floor and ceiling tiles, shingles and household pipes.

**Dealing with it:** Have your home checked for asbestos and if possible have it removed. Sometimes it is safer to leave asbestos where it is and seal it in rather than remove it.

**What:** Radon gas is an odorless, colorless radioactive gas emitted from rock substances like bricks, and concrete. Radon can enter homes through the ground up.

**Effect:** Radon is thought to be the second leading cause of lung cancer. Children are more susceptible to the effects of radon.

**Where found:** Up to 1 in 12 homes have high levels of radon. High radon levels are found mainly in newer homes where insulation is good.

**Dealing with it:** Test your home's radon's level. There are inexpensive radon test kits available. If levels are high, seal cracks where the gas may be entering and use fans to vent the gas from your home.

**What:** Carbon monoxide is an air pollutant caused by burning. For instance: using a wood stove, a gas range, running a car, or someone smoking a cigarette.

**Effect:** Breathing the gas can make a person sick, cause headaches, tiredness, sleepiness.

**When found:** Carbon monoxide levels usually increase in the winter because houses that are sealed against the cold, seal in the gas and seal out fresh air.

**How to deal:** Ensure stoves and fireplaces of all sorts are vented properly. Burn sufficiently aged wood. Don't leave cars idling. In the winter, open windows from time to time to freshen indoor air. Buy a carbon monoxide detector.