



# HOW TO MAKE THE INSIDE OF YOUR HOME HEALTHIER

Most of us equate our homes with warmth, safety, and security. It's often the one place where we feel most comfortable and able to decompress. However, there may be hazards lurking indoors that are counteracting the safety of your home sweet home.

But rest assured—there are some small fixes that can go a long way in making your living space as healthy as can be.

## The Indoor Generation

From home to work to our commute in between, we were officially an indoor generation long before the pandemic hit... but after a year of lockdowns and quarantine, many of us have spent more time indoors than ever before.

It's a notion most of us don't really acknowledge, but one that can have harmful effects on our overall health—especially since indoor air quality is often lower than the air outside.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ranks indoor air quality as one of the top five environmental health risks.<sup>2</sup> Beyond dust and common allergens, fire-resistant chemicals used in furniture or bedding, flooring, and paints and varnishes can all contain harmful agents. These volatile organic compounds (or VOCs) are released during use or storage... and concentrated amounts can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, an increased risk of cancer, and damage to organs like the kidney and liver. Even the cleaning supplies we use to combat the dirt and dust can have VOCs that lead to adverse health effects.

Other harmful substances that may be found in homes include radon gas, lead, and cigarette smoke. And if you have excess moisture in your home's bathroom, basement, or attic, you may also be harboring mold and mildew which also cause adverse health effects.

So what can we do about it?

## Breathe Easier

There are so many potential sources of harmful chemicals that it seems almost impossible to control everything. But there are many things you can do right away to reduce the toxic exposures you are unknowingly subjecting yourself to.<sup>3</sup>

Here are some easy ways to get started.

- Clean on a regular basis, so dust doesn't have a chance to build up.
- Use a HEPA-filter vacuum and a wet cloth (instead of microfiber) to collect the most dust and harmful particles.
- Use mattress and pillow covers to control dust mites, and regularly wash your bedding.
- Service your heating and cooling units seasonally to reduce dust and debris.
- If it is safe to do so, open your windows each day to allow fresh air in.
- Purchase non-toxic, eco-friendly household products to reduce your contact with harmful particles.
- Reduce moisture in your home by checking regularly for leaks and ensuring downspouts and gutters allow adequate drainage away from your home.
- Use exhaust fans when showering or cooking to reduce fumes, odors, humidity, and contaminants.

And if you need a little help, there are home test kits and professionals who are qualified to evaluate air quality and recommend improvements.

## Home Is Where the Heart Is

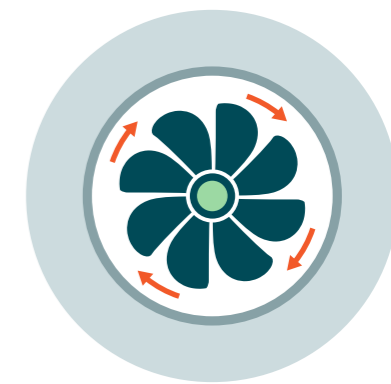
You deserve a clean and healthy living space. While it's true that harmful pollutants are more prevalent indoors than any of us would like, all it takes are a few sensible changes to drastically decrease the risk they present.



CLEAN ON A REGULAR BASIS



OPEN YOUR WINDOWS DAILY



USE EXHAUST FANS



PURCHASE ECO-FRIENDLY HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

<sup>1</sup>Anthes, Emily "Coronavirus Lockdowns May Raise Exposure to Indoor Air Pollution." *Scientific American*, June 2020.

<sup>2</sup>"Why Indoor Air Quality is Important to Schools." *United States Environmental Protection Agency*, October 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Capritto, Amanda "How to improve indoor air quality." *CNET*, September 2020.