

## SECONDHAND SMOKE

Secondhand smoke is the combination of smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke exhaled by smokers. According to the CDC, secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, of which hundreds are toxic and about 70 can cause cancer. In apartment buildings, secondhand smoke can easily travel from smokers' units to common areas, hallways, and non-smokers' units.

### Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke

Children, pregnant women, and the elderly are especially vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke which include:

- Asthma attacks
- Birth defects
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Lung cancer
- Respiratory problems
- Heart Disease



There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. The only way to fully protect non-smokers is to eliminate smoking in indoor spaces.

## RADON

Radon is a naturally occurring gas caused by the breakdown of uranium and radium in rock, soil, and water. Radon can move up through the ground to the air above and into your home through cracks and other holes in the foundation. It cannot be seen and has no odor, so it's important to test your home for radon.

After smoking, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Smokers are particularly vulnerable to radon exposure because their lungs are already unhealthy.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:



For more information and resources on maintaining a healthy home, visit: <https://nchealthyhomes.com/>



For more information, contact Union County Environmental Health:

- **Website:** [unioncountync.gov/departments/environmental-health](https://unioncountync.gov/departments/environmental-health)
- **Email:** [unioncountyeh@unioncountync.gov](mailto:unioncountyeh@unioncountync.gov)
- **Phone numbers:** 704-283-3553 or 704-283-3767

# Healthy Homes



Learn how to  
keep your home  
and family safe!

## CARBON MONOXIDE

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas that if inhaled, can cause death in minutes. Symptoms of CO poisoning include dizziness, headaches, nausea, and fatigue. If carbon monoxide is breathed in, it is important to get to fresh air immediately and seek medical attention.

Common sources of CO in our homes include fuel-burning devices such as:

- Clothes dryers
- Water heaters
- Furnaces or boilers
- Wood stoves
- Gas stoves and ovens
- Motor vehicles
- Fireplaces, both gas and wood burning
- Grills, power tools, lawn equipment

## CHEMICAL IRRITANTS

Chemical irritants inside the home can include:

- Air fresheners
- Scented Candles
- Cleaners
- Paints
- Cosmetics (especially nail polish and perfumes)



Exposure to these chemicals can persist long after the chemical is used. Chemical irritants can trigger asthma attacks, breathing difficulties, and skin irritation. Any reduction in chemical use will improve indoor air quality and make for a healthier home.

## LEAD

Dust or flakes from peeling or chipping lead paint can settle on kid's toys and the floor and easily be consumed by children through hand-to-mouth contact. Lead was banned from use in residential paint in 1978, but any house built before 1978 likely has lead-based paint somewhere in the building.

**Lead removal is extremely hazardous and should only be done by a licensed professional.**

Lead can also be found in some cosmetics, food additives and spices, pottery, jewelry, and traditional medicines. Lead can cause health problems for anyone, but is particularly hazardous to children and pregnant women. Lead exposure is linked with reduced IQ, learning disabilities, and other health problems.

## PESTS AND PESTICIDES

Pests will enter a home when there is plenty of food, water, and shelter available. When pesticides are used to repel pests, we are bringing toxic chemicals into our homes that can be harmful to humans, pets, and wildlife. The presence of pests can cause disease and trigger asthma attacks, while health effects of pesticides include eye, nose, and throat irritations, kidney damage, and the risk of poisoning.

### Common Pests Found in Homes



**Cockroaches:** Their feces and decaying body parts are known to cause asthma in young children.



**Dust Mites:** Feed on human skin flakes and are found in mattresses, pillows, carpets, etc. Body parts and droppings from the mites can trigger asthma in sensitive individuals.



**Rodents:** Mice and rats can carry disease. Mice droppings can cause an allergic reaction in many humans.



**Bed bugs:** Small insects that infest the spaces where people sleep. Their presence can cause loss of sleep and their bites can be irritating to the skin.

## MOLD AND MOISTURE

Molds spores are everywhere floating through the air. When a spore finds an area with ideal moisture, nutrients, and temperature, they begin to grow.

Common places for mold to grow include damp, humid places such as:

- Basements
- Bathrooms
- Under wallpaper and carpet
- Ceilings below leaky roofs
- Crawl spaces
- Walls around leaky pipes



### Health Effects of Mold

Individuals suffering from allergies and asthma are impacted when they breathe in molds floating in the air. Allergic reactions can occur, causing sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, a skin rash, or even shortness of breath and respiratory issues. Excess moisture also attracts pests like cockroaches.