



Healthy Homes

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Autumn is in the air. Time to check your home's safety and health.



7 TIPS FOR KEEPING A HEALTHY HOME

1. Keep it Dry: Prevent water from entering through leaks in roof or windows, through interior plumbing, or from poor drainage around your home.

2. Keep it Clean: Control the source of dust and contaminants and create smooth and cleanable surfaces. Reduce clutter that can hold dust and dirt and use effective wet-cleaning methods, like wet dusting cloths.

3. Keep it Safe: Store poisons out of reach of children and label properly. Secure loose rugs and keep children's play area free from hard or sharp surfaces. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and keep fire extinguishers on hand for easy access.

4. Keep it Well-Ventilated: Keep air flowing in your home by ventilating your bathrooms and kitchens and use whole house ventilation for supplying fresh air to reduce the concentration of contaminants in the home.

5. Keep it Pest-free: All pests look for food, water and shelter. Seal cracks and openings throughout the home; store food in pest-resistant containers. If needed, use sticky-traps and baits in closed containers, along with least-toxic pesticides such as boric acid powder.

6. Keep it Contaminate-

Free: Reduce lead-related hazards in pre-1978 homes by repairing deteriorated paint, and keep floors and window areas clean using a wet-cleaning approach to prevent putting dust and dirt in the air. Test your home for radon, a naturally occurring dangerous gas that enters homes through soil, crawl-spaces, and foundation cracks. Install a radon removal system if levels above the EPA action level is detected.

7. Keep it Well-Maintained: Inspect, clean and repair your home regularly. Take care of minor repairs and problems before they become large repairs and problems.

Make your home the healthiest and safest place to be!

Source: Healthy Homes Program, US Dept of Housing & Urban Development

Candles

Aren't they festive, with scents that just scream "holidays!"

Candle fires peak in December, with Christmas day as the top day for candle fires, followed by Christmas Eve and New Year's Day.

Candle-ignited home fires are estimated at about 15,260 each year, result-

ing 166 deaths per year, while there are almost 1,300 injuries. They most often begin in bedrooms and half of those fires happen between midnight and 6 am - when most people are sleeping.

Check Page 2 for tips in safely using candles in the home.



Enjoy Candles - Safely!



IT'S A FACT:

If your smoke alarm was installed more than 10 years ago, it needs to be replaced.



Causes and Circumstances of Home Candle Fires

- On average, 42 home candle fires are reported every day.
- More than half of all candle fires start when something that could burn such as furniture, mattresses or bedding, curtains, or decorations is too close to the candle.
- In one-fifth (20%) of candle fires, the candles are unattended or abandoned.
- Falling asleep is a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 36% of the associated deaths.
- Every year in December, 13% of home candle fires begin with decorations compared to 4% the rest of the year.
- Young children and older adults have the highest death risk from candle fires.
- The risk of fatal candle fires appears higher when candles are used for light.



TIPS and ALTERNATES:

- Consider using battery-operated or electric flameless candles and fragrance warmers, which can look, smell and feel like real candles – without the flame.
- If you do use candles, ensure they are in sturdy metal, glass or ceramic holders and placed where they cannot be easily knocked over.
- Avoid using candles in bedrooms and sleeping areas.
- Extinguish candles after use, before going to bed or when leaving home.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn.
- Keep candles out of the reach of children and pets.
- Set a good example by using matches, lighters and fire carefully.
- Children should never be allowed to play with matches, lighters or candles.
- Never use a candle where medical oxygen is being used. The two can combine to create a large, unexpected fire.
- Always use a flashlight – not a candle – for emergency lighting.
- Never put candles on a Christmas tree.
- When using in home worship, don't place lit candles in windows, where blinds and curtains can close over them, or pass hand-held candles from one person to another. To lower the risk of fire, candles should be used by only a few designated adults.

NEVER leave burning candles unattended!

In the event of a fire, remember time is the biggest enemy and every second counts!

Escape first, and then call for help. Develop a home fire escape plan and practice it frequently with your family. Designate a meeting place outside. Make sure everyone in the family knows two ways to escape from every room.

Never stand up in a fire - always crawl low under the smoke, and try to keep your mouth covered. Never return to a burning building for any reason: it may cost you your life.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire.

Sources: US Fire Administration/FEMA, NFIRS, NFPA

Choosing Safe Toys

How do people usually choose toys? Buying the latest new thing or trying it out when no one is looking?

Toys are manufactured by the millions and new ones are constantly coming on the market. While there are manufacturers guidelines, understanding what is safe and supervising use is important. Knowing how to choose an entertaining and perhaps educational toy, while making sure it is appropriate for the child AND safe to play with can be daunting. Kids Health from Nemours Children's Hospitals offers the following advice to keep in mind when shopping.

- Toys made of fabric should be labeled as "flame resistant" or "flame retardant".
- Stuffed toys should be washable.
- Painted toys should be covered with lead-free paint.
- Art materials should say "non-toxic".
- Crayons and paints should say "ASTM-D-4236 on the



package, which means they have been evaluated by the American Society for Testing and Materials.

- Be wary of size and detachable pieces. Small toys or pieces can be easily swallowed, like marbles, game pieces, buttons or pieces that could be pulled loose.
- Ensure battery operated toys have cases that are secured.
- Check for sharp ends, strings longer than 7 inches, or parts that could pinch.
- Riding toys should be for children who can sit up well while unsupported. Some should even have safety harnesses or straps.

Older toys, and even some

hand-me-downs may not meet current safety standards and may have parts so worn they can break and become hazardous.

Make sure a toy that makes noise isn't too loud for your child. Some rattles, squeak toys and musical or electronic toys can be as loud as a car horn if held directly to the ear, contributing to hearing damage.

Follow the labels that indicate the appropriate age. They are covered in guidelines published by the [Consumer Protection Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#).

After your child receives safe toys, show your child how to use them. Store them properly and check frequently to make sure they are not broken. Be sure to keep them clean! Some plastic toys can be cleaned in dishwasher, but be sure to read the manufacturer's directions. Another option: A mix of antibacterial soap or mild dishwashing detergent with hot water in a spray bottle, rinsing afterward.

In children's safety, err on the side of caution!



Stuffed animals and other toys sold or given away at carnivals, fairs, or in vending machines are not required to meet safety standards. Check these toys very carefully before providing to a child.



Jr. Lead Detective Program

Teaching children about health and safety can pay off big time! Getting children engaged in healthy behaviors, along with parents and care givers who set good examples, can help establish habits that lead to a life time of healthier and safer living.

The **Jr. Lead Detective**

program teaches children, parents and care givers basic information about lead poisoning prevention, good hand washing, and ways to be safe at home.

These presentations are scheduled upon request. Childcare centers and elemen-

tary schools are great places to feed children's enthusiasm!

Contact the Childhood Lead Poisoning staff at

Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (813) 307-8071 or email

Cynthia.Keeton@flhealth.gov



Follow the **3-point rule** when using a ladder - **2 hands & 1 foot**

OR

1 hand & 2 feet always in contact with the ladder.



A straight or extension ladder should be placed **1 foot** away from the surface it rests against for every **4 feet** of ladder height.

Holiday Safety Tips

The National Safety Council suggests the following tips to keep your holidays joyous and your loved ones safe.

Decorating Safety

- * Use no more than 3 sets of lights on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping, but not across doorways, around furniture legs, or under rugs or carpets.
- * If you use plants or trees, water well to avoid drying and stand them away from fireplaces or other heat sources to reduce fire hazard.
- * Use indoor lights indoors and outdoor lights outdoors. Check the UL label. Replace light sets with damaged wires or sockets.
- * When using outdoor lights or electrical cords, fasten them firmly to a secure support with insulated staples or hooks to avoid wind damage. Never nail, tack or stress wiring and keep plugs off the ground and away from water puddles or damp ground.
- * If artificial plants or trees are used, make sure it is one tested and labeled as fire resistant. If they have built-in electrical systems, they should have the "UL" label.
- * Unplug extension cords and lights when leaving the house or going to bed.
- * Never use candles near trees, curtains, wreaths or other potentially flammable item.
- * Keep plants out of reach of children and pets, who may taste or eat them. Some traditional holiday plants may be poisonous or cause intestinal illness if eaten (examples: mistletoe, holly berries, amaryllis, Jerusalem cherries).
- * Avoid placing breakable ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts within reach of small children or pets.
- * Use caution if spraying artificial snow, which can irritate lungs if inhaled.
- * Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair". It can irritate eyes and skin. A common substitute is non-flammable cotton.

Food Prep and Handling

Most fall and winter holidays are associated with some traditional family foods. Proper food storage and handling can help ensure no one ends up with upset tummies!

1. WASH HANDS FREQUENTLY. Be sure that utensils, sinks, cutting boards and dish towels that come in contact with raw meats are well

cleaned before other use.

2. Clean fruit and vegetables thoroughly before preparing to cook or serve raw.

3. Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw in cold water, the refrigerator or microwave.

4. Within 2 hours after cooking, refrigerate or freeze leftovers in covered, shallow containers to cool foods

faster.

5. Use different cutting boards and utensils for raw meats and poultry, cooked meats and poultry, and other foods.

6. Avoid cleaning kitchen surfaces with wet dishcloths or sponges to avoid spreading bacteria. Use clean paper towels or sanitizing wipes.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDER UPDATES AND EDUCATION - LEADCARE II

Reach the children most at risk with the LeadCare® II point-of-care test.

Tackle health disparities early.

Forty percent of families served by federal health programs, such as Medicaid and WIC, do not follow through with prescribed blood lead testing at a reference lab. Yet the prevalence of elevated blood lead for these children is 5 times higher than the general population¹.

Point-of-care testing with the LeadCare II provides an immediate opportunity to treat and educate, minimizing the health and learning problems that come from lead exposure.

Point-of-care testing reaches those at risk, eliminating need for follow up.

Rapid results mean you can educate and begin intervention immediately, while parents are still in

your clinic. LeadCare II's accurate result **empowers parents and communities** to act without delay.

Over 535,000 children in the U.S. have harmful blood lead levels.² Have these children in your community been identified? **Who should be tested?** Federal law requires that **all Medicaid eligible children** be tested at 12 and 24

months and ages 36 to 72 months if they have not previously been tested.

Who is at risk for lead exposure? Children are considered at risk if any of the following are true⁴:

Child lives in or frequently visits a home built before 1950 or a recently renovated home built before 1978. Child has a sibling or frequent playmate with elevated blood lead levels, Child's parent or primary caregiver works with lead. Examples include:

battery recycling or manufacture, lead smelting, lead mining, auto repair, shipbuilding, construction, plumbing, and glass manufacture, Child is a recent immigrant, refugee, or foreign adoptee, Child has a household member who uses traditional, folk, or ethnic remedies or cosmetics or who routinely eats food imported informally (e.g., by a family member).

The LeadCare II System was developed with the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** so children can be screened for lead wherever they already receive healthcare or services. It is the only CLIA-waived point-of-care blood lead testing system. **Accurate, early diagnosis is crucial** so that children can be treated to prevent serious health and learning consequences. Blood lead testing also guides lead remediation and enforcement actions to

eliminate contamination in housing, consumer products, and the environment. **No safe levels.**

Evidence continues to grow that even low blood lead levels may affect learning. Elevated blood lead levels have been associated with **avoidable special education costs of \$3,331 per child** and a decrease in lifetime earnings.



To learn more contact Cynthia O. Keeton to request an on-site Childhood Lead Poisoning Screening and Case Management In-service Training at 813 307-8015 ext. 7108 or email your request to:

Cynthia.Keeton@flhealth.gov

This article was excerpted on 10/16/13 from <http://www.leadcare2.com/Public-Health-Providers>. Please visit the site for the full article and sources.

LEAD ALERT NETWORK

Elevated levels of lead, a heavy metal, in the blood, particularly of children, can cause serious health problems and developmental delays.

Ensuring your child is tested at recommended intervals and that they are not exposed to lead in the environment, especially at home, is important. Check with your child's health

care provider to see if your child has been tested or needs to be retested.

Lead can be in dust, dirt and soil in and around your home, in lead plumbing pipes, in paint that contains lead, and in some products and toys.

To find out if toys or products contain lead or to report unsafe products, visit the

Consumer Products Safety Commission website:

www.saferproducts.gov/Default.aspx

Consider enrolling in the Lead Alert Network. For more information about LEAD, call or email the Florida Department of Health - Hillsborough 813-307-8071

Cynthia.Keeton@flhealth.gov

LEAD ALERT NETWORK

Automatic email response system that notifies you when toys or other products are recalled.

Just sign up! Email: FHH_LPPP@doh.state.fl.us

and request to be added.

National Lead Poison Prevention Week (NLPPW)



Today, childhood lead poisoning is considered the most preventable environmental disease among young children, yet approximately half a million US children have blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter, the reference level at which Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recommends public health actions be initiated. A simple blood test can prevent permanent damage that will last a lifetime. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), CDC, is committed to eliminating this burden to public health.

CDC and US Health and Human Services share the goal of eliminating childhood lead poisoning in the United States. NLPPW occurs every year during the last full week in October ([Senate Resolution 199](#)) to raise awareness about lead poisoning, stress the importance of screening the highest risk children younger than 6 years of age (preferably by ages 1 and 2) if they have not been tested yet, highlight partners' efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning, and urge people to take steps to reduce lead exposure.

The Florida Department of Health-Hillsborough County will provide Childhood Lead Poisoning trainings to pediatric providers, "I know Where Lead Is Hiding" to elementary schools, education and awareness to colleges of public health students, and local grassroots organizations. For more information about NLPPW activities in your area, please contact The Florida Department of Health - Hillsborough County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program 813- 307-8015 ext. 7108 or email Cynthia.Keeton@doh.state

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION
AND HEALTH HOMES PROGRAM
Post Office Box 5135
Tampa, Florida 33675-5135

Phone: 813-307-8071
Fax: 813-272-6918
Email: Cynthia_Keeton@doh.state.fl.us

We're on the web!
www.hillscountyhealth.org



Mission: Protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, local and community efforts.