

# 12 WAYS

TO A  
HEALTHY HOME



Department of  
**HEALTH &  
HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of  
Public Health

**S**ome health problems for children and adults may start in the home. Even when we want to keep our families safe and healthy, it is hard to know what steps to take to do so. In addition to the information in this booklet, below are a few additional resources that can provide you with more information and assistance for your family. Look on the back cover for the contact information of each program.

### 211 NH

- Dial 2-1-1 from anywhere in New Hampshire for free, confidential, person-to-person assistance finding health and human services.
- Available 24/7 with translation assistance in over 150 languages.

**New Hampshire 2-1-1:  
Dial 2-1-1**

### HEALTHY MOMS AND BABIES

- Home visiting services for families from pregnancy to a child's 18th birthday.
- Parenting support & child health and developmental screenings.

**DHHS Maternal and  
Child Health:  
1-603-271-4517**

### HEALTH INSURANCE

- Health coverage pays for provider services, hospital care, and medications.
- Insurance plans can differ by how much you pay and the services that are covered.

**New Hampshire Insurance  
Department: [insurance.nh.gov/  
consumers/health-insurance](https://insurance.nh.gov/consumers/health-insurance)**

### LEGAL HELP

- Several agencies and organizations in New Hampshire provide low-cost or free (pro bono) legal aid.

**New Hampshire Legal  
Assistance Resources:  
[courts.nh.gov/self-help/getting-  
started/legal-assistance](https://courts.nh.gov/self-help/getting-started/legal-assistance)**



# 12 Ways to a Healthy Home

This booklet was created by the New Hampshire Healthy Homes Committee to share information on hazards that exist in homes and how they can impact you and your family's health. It was updated in July 2026.

We hope it will help you find resources, tips, and more information on ways to provide a healthier home for you and your family!

---

## Contents

1



**Lead**

7



**Drinking Water**

2



**Tobacco Smoke**

8



**Rodents & Insects**

3



**Asthma**

9



**Fire**

4



**Injury**

10



**Radon**

5



**Carbon Monoxide**

11



**Bed Bugs**

6



**Moisture & Mold**

12



**Weatherization**



# LEAD



1

**Lead** can be found in dust, paint, soil, drinking water, and

in a variety of household objects. If your home was built before 1978, it may also contain lead paint. Everyday activities, such as opening and closing lead-painted windows or performing common household renovations and repairs,

may generate lead dust. If lead dust is ingested or inhaled, even in very small amounts, it can be a serious health risk, especially for young children and pregnant women.

---

**A minimum of 32,350 young children in New Hampshire are living in older homes with lead paint.**

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Test all one- and two-year-olds for lead.**
- **Hire a licensed lead inspector** to find out if your home has lead hazards.
- **Use an EPA “RRP Certified” (Renovate, Repair, Paint) contractor** who understands how to use lead-safe work practices when renovating or repairing your home.
- **Regularly wash** hands, toys, bottles, pacifiers, floors, windowsills, and other areas where lead dust may settle.
- **Be careful that you don’t bring home lead** from your job site or hobby.



## Tobacco Smoke

can linger in the air and settle on surfaces when people smoke indoors, creating second- and third-hand smoke. There is no safe level of exposure to this smoke. Children and pets are especially at risk because they often play or rest in areas where residue from tobacco

2



smoke collects. Even electronic nicotine devices, like e-cigarettes, can release nicotine, heavy metals, and harmful chemicals into the air that can be harmful to your family's health.

---

**Since 2005, more than 41,000 people have accessed tobacco quit support through the New Hampshire Tobacco Helpline.**

---

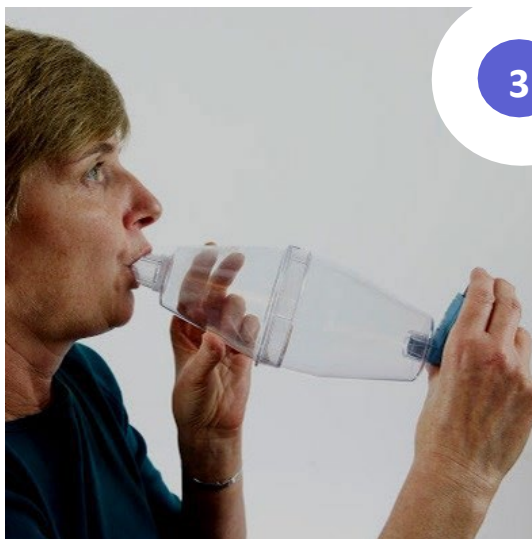
## WHAT TO DO

- **Until you quit, choose to smoke outside.** Consider asking family, friends, and visitors who smoke or use e-cigarettes or vaping products to do so outside.
- **Keep yourself and your children away from places where smoking is allowed.** Tobacco smoke can cause severe health issues in children, especially in children with respiratory conditions.
- **Keep nicotine products away from children and pets.** Call the Northern New England Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 in case of a liquid nicotine exposure.
- **Call the New Hampshire Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or ask your healthcare provider** for ways to help quit tobacco and other electronic nicotine devices.



# TOBACCO SMOKE

12 WAYS TO A HEALTHY HOME



3

**Asthma** is a condition in which the airways become swollen, resulting in wheezing, coughing, or chest tightness. Tobacco smoke, moisture, mold, pets, rodents, and insects in your home can trigger an attack. Know the common asthma triggers and ways to avoid them.

**12% of New Hampshire residents have asthma. The “spacer” pictured above is a helpful tool used to deliver asthma medication.**

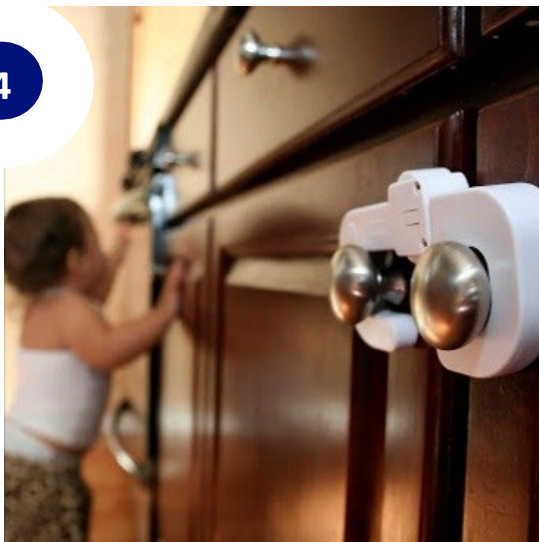
## WHAT TO DO

- **Know your triggers.** Avoid tobacco smoke, mold, and rodents (see sections on *Tobacco Smoke, Moisture & Mold*, and *Rodents & Insects*). Take steps to prevent exposure to them.
- **Wash bedding in hot water.** Use a hypoallergenic mattress and pillow covers.
- **Clean surfaces and floors regularly** with a wet or microfiber cloth. Use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum for carpets and furniture.
- **Keep pets out of the bedroom.** Pet dander can increase symptoms.
- **Have an Asthma Action Plan.** Work with your health care provider to develop a written Asthma Management Plan.
- **Know your medicines** and symptoms.
- **Get a flu shot.** People with asthma are at high risk for complications from flu. Flu can trigger asthma attacks, worsen asthma symptoms, and lead to pneumonia.



**Injuries** happen, but many common ones can be prevented with simple changes to your daily habits and home. Start by monitoring children near appliances, bathtubs, and stairs and storing medicine and cleaners safely.

4



On average, 222 New Hampshire residents between the ages of 10-19 are hospitalized for non-fatal injuries every year.

## WHAT TO DO

- **Install grab bars** and use non-slip mats in the tub and shower.
- **Install lighting** over stairs, steps, and on landings.
- **Keep stairs clear.** Avoid excessive clutter in and around your home to avoid falls.
- **Prevent children from jumping** on beds or climbing on furniture.
- **Keep beds, cribs, and other furniture away** from windows.
- **To avoid scalds,** set the thermostat on your water heater to 120° F or lower.
- **Prevent poisonings** by moving medications, alcohol, cleaning products, bug killers, fertilizers, and fuels into locked cupboards out of reach of children and pets.
- **Keep the phone number** for the Northern New England Poison Control Center handy (1-800-222-1222).



INJURY

12 WAYS TO A HEALTHY HOME



5

## Carbon Monoxide

(CO) is an invisible, odorless, and deadly gas. It is created when heating fuels burn incompletely. Heating and cooking equipment, generators, and vehicles running in attached garages can be sources of CO.

---

**Exposure to carbon monoxide can produce symptoms that mimic the flu. Low doses over time or large amounts at once can be fatal.**

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Install CO alarms** on every level of your home and outside sleeping areas. Test these alarms MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries.** Models with removable batteries should have them replaced twice a year. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Fuel-burning appliances** should be installed by a licensed professional. These include any that use wood, gas, oil, pellets, and coal. Never heat your house with an oven.
- **Know the signs of CO poisoning.** If you suspect CO poisoning, leave your home immediately and call 911.
- **Generators, charcoal grills, gasoline-powered devices, and any unvented** heating sources should be kept 20 feet from the house. They should never be used near or in the house or garage.





6



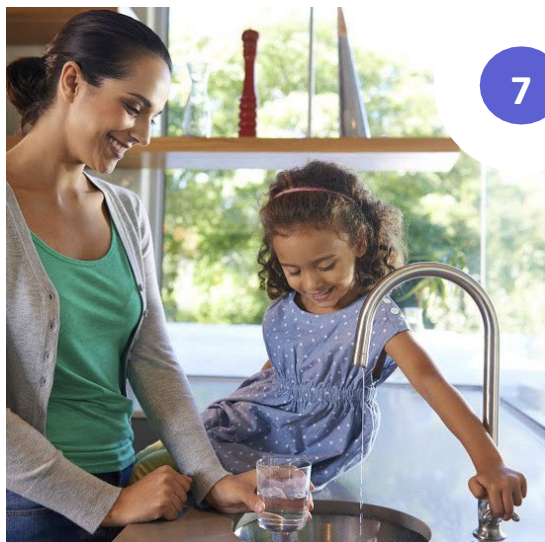
**Mold** can grow on almost anything when there's too much moisture. Fixing leaks and controlling dampness is the most important way to prevent mold growth.

Moisture creates a good environment for bacteria, cockroaches, and dust mites, which can cause allergy and asthma symptoms.

## WHAT TO DO

- **Fix plumbing and roof leaks** as soon as possible.
- **Dry all wet areas as soon as possible!** The longer it's there, the more damage it will do. Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely.
- **Know when you can clean it yourself.** If the area affected is more than 3 x 3 feet, locate a professional at these websites:  
[ACAC.org](http://ACAC.org)  
[IICRC.org](http://IICRC.org)
- **Increase ventilation** when cooking and showering. If there is no fan, open the window.
- **Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier** in the summer to reduce humidity. Keep the relative humidity in your home between 40% and 60%.
- **Clean and maintain** air conditioners and dehumidifiers at least monthly.





7

**Water** from a private well can contain arsenic, radon, and other contaminants linked to cancer and serious illnesses. Many contaminants have no taste, odor, or color. Unlike private wells, water that comes from the town or city is regularly tested. It is

important to test your well water frequently for contaminants that can impact your health.

---

**1 in 5 residential wells in New Hampshire contains arsenic, a poisonous chemical that can cause bladder cancer.**

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Know what's in your water.** Test your well water every year for bacteria and nitrates. Test every 3 to 5 years for the state-recommended "Standard Analysis."
- **Protect the area around your well from contamination.** Keep the area around your well clean and chemical free. Fertilizers, animal waste, fuel, and oil from parked cars, lawn equipment and recreational vehicles can get into the ground and contaminate your well.
- **Drink & cook with bottled water if your well is contaminated.** Use bottled water or have a qualified technician install a treatment system.

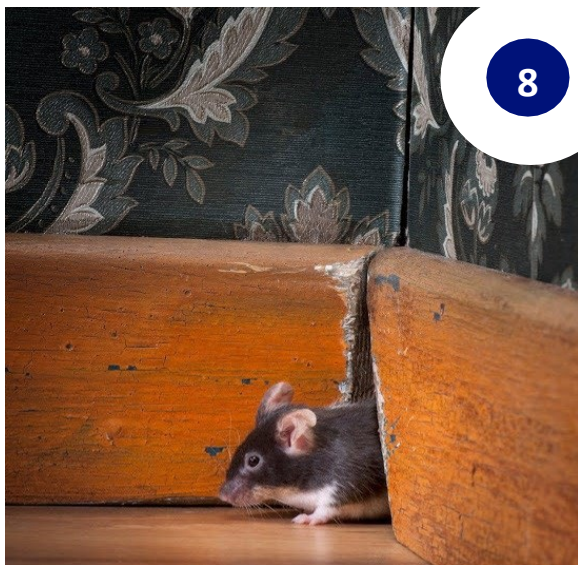




8

## Rodents &

**insects** need food, water, shelter, and a way to enter in order to survive in your house. Aside from being pests, rodents and insects can be an asthma trigger. Good pest control includes monitoring, cleaning up, and shutting pests out of the home.



A mouse can fit through a hole the size of a dime.

## WHAT TO DO

- **Secure food.** Put a tight lid on your garbage can; put food away and wash dirty dishes daily; put pet food away at night.
- **Remove water sources** like plumbing leaks, pet water bowls, and a wet dish drying rack.
- **Clean up.** Regularly wash counter surfaces and clean cooking appliances like the oven and toaster.
- **Seal cracks and crevices** where pests can enter your home.
- **Choose safer “greener” pest control products.** Place all pesticides out of the reach of children.





9

**Fires** are preventable. Properly install and maintain your smoke alarms. Develop and practice a fire escape plan with your family. Watch out for electrical, kitchen, and home hazards that can make your home more prone to fires and related injuries.

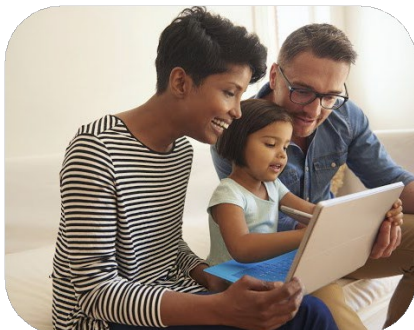
---

Smoke alarms should be replaced 10 years after the manufacturing date.

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Install smoke alarms** on every level of your home, in every bedroom, and outside sleeping areas, including the basement. Test them all MONTHLY.
- **Replace batteries.** Models with removable batteries should have them replaced twice a year. A good time is when the clocks are reset in the spring or fall.
- **Alarms lose their sensitivity** and should be replaced every 10 years.
- **Keep a 3-foot clear zone** around fireplaces, wood stoves, and any heating device or equipment.
- **Develop and practice an escape plan** with family members. Be sure your escape routes are free of clutter.





# RADON

12 WAYS TO A HEALTHY HOME

10

**Radon** is an

invisible, odorless, radioactive gas that

comes from soil and bedrock, including granite. It can enter your home through cracks in the foundation or from your water supply. Over time, exposure to radon can lead to illness and even cancer. Radon is the second-leading

cause of lung cancer in New Hampshire. Radon test kits are simple to use. Test your home today and know the risk of radon.

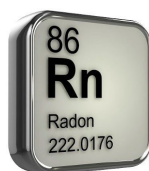
---

**A radon mitigation system, as pictured above, can be used to vent radon gas out of your home.**

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Test your home for radon.** Many easy-to-use test kits are less than \$20. Test kits are available at local hardware stores and online. If you are a resident of New Hampshire, [free radon test kits](#) are available from the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services.
- **Be sure to test before and after home renovations,** or before the purchase of a new home. In new construction test before the building is complete.
- **Seal floors and cracks** to prevent radon from entering your home and living space.
- **If the radon level is 4 picocuries per liter or higher** in the lowest livable space of your home, hire a qualified radon mitigation contractor.





**Bed Bugs** do not carry disease, but they do feed exclusively on blood once every 5 to 10 days. They are successful hitchhikers, moving from an infested site to furniture, bedding, boxes, and clothing. They multiply at an incredibly rapid pace.

11



---

**In six months, one bed bug can multiply to over 30,000 bugs.**

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Contact a pest professional or your landlord** immediately. Do NOT treat the situation yourself. If your landlord is not responsive, contact your local code or health officer.
- **Vacuum your mattress, box spring, headboard & floors daily.** Empty the vacuum into a sealed plastic bag and take it outside.
- **Use mattress encasements and Climbups®** to cover the mattress, box spring, and feet of your bed.
- **Do NOT change where you sleep.** Make your bed an “island” by pulling the bed away from the wall. Do not let the bedding touch the floor and remove clutter around and under the bed.
- **Heat clothing and bedding** in the dryer for 20 minutes on high heat to kill bed bugs. Seal the items in plastic bags until after treatment.
- **Don’t spread the contamination.** Write “BED BUG INFESTED” on items you are throwing away.



12

## Weatherization

helps families reduce their energy bills by

improving the energy efficiency of their homes. Low-income families are the most vulnerable to rising fuel costs. Money not spent on energy bills can be used for other necessities, like food and medication.

---

Make sure your heating system receives professional maintenance each year.

---

## WHAT TO DO

- **Seal holes, cracks, and gaps** throughout your home to prevent air leaks.
- **It takes energy to heat water.** Reduce your water use by only washing full loads of dishes and clothes. Take shorter showers instead of baths. Replace sink and shower fixtures with low flow nozzles and showerheads.
- **Central air conditioning.** For every degree warmer you set it, you will shave 3 to 4 percent from your electric bill for cooling.
- **Install a programmable thermostat** that turns down the heat during the day while you are away.



# Resources That Can Help Your Family

## Asthma

- 603-271-4501
- [dhhs.nh.gov/asthma](https://dhhs.nh.gov/asthma)

## Bed Bugs

- Dial 2-1-1
- [epa.gov/bedbugs](https://epa.gov/bedbugs)

## Carbon Monoxide

- Dial 911
- [firemarshal.dos.nh.gov/prevention-safety/outreach-education/carbon-monoxide](https://firemarshal.dos.nh.gov/prevention-safety/outreach-education/carbon-monoxide)

## Drinking Water

- 603-271-2513
- [des.nh.gov/water/drinking-water/private-wells](https://des.nh.gov/water/drinking-water/private-wells)

## Environmental Health

- 603-271-0357
- [dhhs.nh.gov/epht](https://dhhs.nh.gov/epht)

## Fire Safety

- Dial 911
- [firemarshal.dos.nh.gov/prevention-safety/outreach-education](https://firemarshal.dos.nh.gov/prevention-safety/outreach-education)

## Injuries

- 603-271-4517
- [dhhs.nh.gov/injuryprevention](https://dhhs.nh.gov/injuryprevention)

## Lead

- 800-897-5323
- [dhhs.nh.gov/leadinfo](https://dhhs.nh.gov/leadinfo)

## Maternal and Child Health/Home Visiting

- 603-271-4517
- [dhhs.nh.gov/mch](https://dhhs.nh.gov/mch)

## Moisture and Mold

- 603-271-3468
- [epa.gov/mold](https://epa.gov/mold)

## NH Health Insurance

- 603-271-2261
- [insurance.nh.gov/consumers/health-insurance](https://insurance.nh.gov/consumers/health-insurance)

## NH Housing Grant for Lead

- 800-640-7239
- [nhhfa.org/rental-assistance/landlords-property-owners/lead-and-healthy-homes/](https://nhhfa.org/rental-assistance/landlords-property-owners/lead-and-healthy-homes/)

## NH Legal Assistance

- 800-562-3174
- [courts.nh.gov/self-help/getting-started/legal-assistance](https://courts.nh.gov/self-help/getting-started/legal-assistance)

## Pests

- [epa.gov/pesticides/public-health-issues-caused-pests](https://epa.gov/pesticides/public-health-issues-caused-pests)

## Mosquitoes

- 603-271-4496
- [dhhs.nh.gov/mosquito](https://dhhs.nh.gov/mosquito)

## Ticks

- 603-271-4496
- [dhhs.nh.gov/ticks](https://dhhs.nh.gov/ticks)

## Poison Center

- 800-222-1222
- [nnepc.org](https://nnepc.org)

## Radon

- 603-271-1708
- [dhhs.nh.gov/radon](https://dhhs.nh.gov/radon)

## Rodents

- 603-271-3468
- [cdc.gov/healthy-pets/rodent-control](https://cdc.gov/healthy-pets/rodent-control)

## Substance Use

- Dial 2-1-1
- [thedoorway.nh.gov](https://thedoorway.nh.gov)

## Tobacco

- 800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)
- [dhhs.nh.gov/tobacco](https://dhhs.nh.gov/tobacco)

## Weatherization Assistance

- 603-271-3670
- [energy.nh.gov/consumers/help-energy-and-utility-bills/weatherization-assistance-program](https://energy.nh.gov/consumers/help-energy-and-utility-bills/weatherization-assistance-program)