



## Reduce Indoor Air Pollution

Our homes have become energy-efficient domains, reducing the use of non-replenishable resources such as coal, oil, etc. However, the reduction in the amount of fresh air in our homes has caused the indoor air to become polluted with fumes and toxic chemicals. This is especially dangerous for the young, elderly and chronically ill, who are the most exposed to indoor air pollutants.

To reduce your exposure to indoor air pollution, you can:

1. Open your windows, when possible, to circulate fresh air in your home.

Dr. Samuel Epstein, co-author of *The Safe Shoppers Bible* says, “that concentrations of toxic chemicals may be greater indoors than outdoors as they are less able to be dispersed.

According to a 5-year study carried out by the EPA, peak concentrations of 20 toxic compounds, some linked to cancer and birth defects, were 200-500 times higher inside homes than outdoors.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), poor indoor air quality is one of the top 5 threats to public health.

2. Buy and use natural, non-toxic washing/cleaning products whenever possible. Conventional household cleaners release synthetic, toxic chemicals into the air with each use.
3. Install ventilating/exhaust fans to bring fresh air into your home (e.g. bath, kitchen and attic fans)
4. Use low-VOC (low odor) paints/stains when remodeling your home.

Many paints, stains, thinners, paint strippers and furniture emit toxic fumes that contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), such as benzene, toluene, xylene and methylene chloride.

Avoid spray painting to limit fumes and particles inhaled.

Use less hazardous non-chlorinated solvents, such as ethanol, acetone and turpentine, if necessary.

5. Use air deodorizers made with natural, non-toxic ingredients, and without propellants. Conventional air deodorizers are scented with petroleum-based fragrances that are released into the air with each use.
6. Reduce/eliminate pesticide use indoors. Pesticides, if used, release chemicals/fumes into the air.

(See Eliminate/Reduce Use of and Exposure To Pesticides, below)



7. Buy whole wood furniture with wool/cotton cushions.

Furniture made of plywood, particleboard, pressed wood or medium density fiberboard is treated with formaldehyde, which may emit fumes for up to 5 years.

Fabrics with a permanent-press finish are also treated with formaldehyde.

Furniture cushions and mattresses may be made from polyurethane foam/plastic, and the fabric with acrylic, polyester or polyvinyl chloride. All are toxic to the respiratory system.

Furniture might be coated with polyurethane, which is a respiratory toxin.
8. Buy pressure-treated wood vs. wood treated with preservatives; use low-emitting building materials (phenol resins, not urea resins).

Particle-board used for flooring is treated with formaldehyde, which may emit fumes for up to 5 years.

Wood floors might be coated with polyurethane, which is a respiratory toxin.

Particleboard floors can be sealed and covered with hardwood, cork, ceramic, terra cotta or porcelain flooring.
9. Buy clothing, sheets and mattresses made of natural materials (unbleached cotton, wool, non-fumigated straw).
10. Remove synthetic carpets and padding in your home. Replace them with cotton, wool, sisal and jute rugs.

Ensure that mothproofing chemicals have not been used.

Synthetic carpets, which are petrochemical-based, probably contain benzene, toluene and formaldehyde.

If synthetic carpet must be installed, ventilate the home continuously for 48-72 hours after installation.

The padding underneath is usually made of polyurethane.
11. Reduce your exposure to chlorine.

Decorate with live plants to help remove the toxins and supply oxygen.
12. Use radon resistant construction techniques (contact a trained contractor). Radon gas can seep into your home through the cracks in the foundation and walls, dirt floors, floor drains and sump pumps.
13. Keep the house clean to reduce biological contaminants such as dust mites, pollens, bacteria, animal dander and mold.
14. Annually inspect heating systems and chimneys, repair as needed. Heating systems may emit carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide, major pollutants.



15. Maintain moderate temperatures and humidity levels to reduce the rate at which formaldehyde is released and to reduce biological contaminants.
16. Leave asbestos materials undisturbed if they are in good condition. Do not cut, rip or sand asbestos containing materials. Use a trained professional to remove/clean up asbestos. Older homes may also contain asbestos, which releases damaging particles when disturbed.
17. Leave lead-based paint undisturbed if it is in good condition. Do not sand or burn off paint containing lead. Fine lead particles are released into the air during remodeling of pre-1980 homes.
18. Use art/hobby materials with proper ventilation. Use safer art materials (water-based rather than solvent based) that are certified non-toxic by the Arts and Crafts Materials Institute (AP or CP on label). Solvents used in hobby/art activities (e.g. adhesives, paints, coatings, markers, photo chemicals) release toxic chemicals into the air (such as hexane, toluene, xylene, methylene chloride, trichloroethylene).

[www.gobiotrend.com](http://www.gobiotrend.com)