

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Take a Step Towards a Healthier Life—Test Your Home for Radon



Written by Kathryn Holland, FACS Extension Agent, Colquitt Coun-



The holiday season is here with family, friends, and neighbors gathering to share good times, good food and make memories. As the weather cools we close the windows, turn on the heat and spend more of that time indoors where you may find an unwelcome visitor – radon.



Image source: Pixabay

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Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas and the second leading cause of lung cancer. Each year approximately 21,000 people die from radon-induced lung cancer. Radon gas rises through the ground and builds up in homes or buildings as it seeps through foundation cracks and joints. Because it is heavier than air, the radon level is higher near the floor, placing children and pets at a higher risk.

You cannot see, smell, or taste radon, so testing is the only way to know if your radon levels are high. It is an easy, fun and educational project to do with children.

If the test results indicate that your home has a high level of radon, it is relatively simple and inexpensive to fix the problem. Basically, a vent pipe with a fan is installed to remove the radon from your home. The installation of a radon mitigation system should be done by a certified radon professional. To find a list of qualified radon mitigators, visit the UGA Radon Program website (www.UGAradon.org).

Protect your loved ones by testing for radon today. Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season. For more information send an email to: ugaradon@uga.edu.



Give the gift of safety.

Order a home radon test kit from UGA at www.UGAradon.org. Your local Extension Office may also sell kits. To find out call 1-800-ASK-UGA1.

Want to learn more about keeping children safe and healthy in child care?

Healthy Environments for Child Care Online Learning Modules

- Keep Me Lead Free!
- Injury Prevention and Control
- *(More modules coming soon)*

<http://bit.ly/HealthyEnvironmentsforChildCare>

Healthy Environment: Safe & Age-Appropriate Toys

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Extension Agent, Crisp County



Image source: Pixabay

Shopping at your favorite store or clicking a button online brings a certain responsibility when toy hunting for children. Holidays and birthdays are common times when children receive toys as gifts, and that can increase potential hazards for your child. Choose wisely to ensure that toys in your home are safe for children.

One of the most important steps is to choose toys appropriate for your child's age. This means choosing something that is complex enough to be interesting, but not so difficult that it's above your child's ability. It is also important to ensure that toys are used properly. When choosing the ideal toy for a child in your life, think about the child and the toy. Ask yourself about the child's interests, abilities and needs, likes and dislikes, and the type of play area available. Avoid toys that won't work in the space available. For example, remote-controlled cars usually do not work well on carpeted surfaces.

Here are some basic guidelines to choose safe toys for children:

1. Select high quality toys made of sturdy, durable materials. Avoid toys that are cheaply made, because they could break easily.
2. Avoid toys with sharp edges and/or sharp points. These could cause injury.
3. Avoid toys with small parts for children under age 3, or children who still put things in their mouths regularly. The small parts could be a choking hazard.
4. When buying battery-operated toys, make sure the parts are secure, the batteries cannot be removed easily, and the toy is sturdy enough to handle how your child plays.
5. Read package labels to make sure the toy was made using safe materials. Look for words like "non-toxic" on art materials, and "flame resistant" on fabric toys.
6. Check the suggested age range on the package. Be cautious about choosing toys that are for older children, because they may be unsafe for a younger child.
7. If a toy comes with instructions, be sure you read them and share any safety information with children. Teach children how to use toys safely, and always supervise children while playing.

Holidays and birthdays are also a great time to teach children to pick up their toys after playtime, and put them away on shelves or in a toy box. Having a designated place for specific toys will make clean-up easier, and keeping toys off the floor will reduce the risk of tripping. You should periodically check each toy to make sure all parts are still attached and nothing is broken or loose.

Play is the most important way children learn. By following these guidelines when choosing toys, you can help ensure that they are safe in their play.

For more information on selecting toys for children, visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) website (www.naeyc.org).

Things to Avoid

Sharp Edges
Small Parts
Loud Noises



Image source: Pixabay



Controlling Asthma Triggers

Written by Ines Beltran, FACS Extension Agent, Gwinnett County

Asthma is a long-term disease that affects your lungs. It causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing. If you have asthma, you have it all the time, but you will have asthma attacks only when something bothers your lungs.

The best way to control your asthma is by knowing the warning signs of an attack and staying away from things that trigger an attack. Asthma can be triggered by things like house dust mites, tobacco smoke, some medicines, high humidity, and some foods and food additives. It is important to learn what triggers your attacks so that you can avoid the triggers whenever possible. Some things that may trigger an asthma attack include:

- Dust mites. Use mattress covers and pillow case covers to create a barrier between dust mites and yourself.
- Cockroaches and their droppings. Remove as many water and food sources as you can because cockroaches need food and water to survive. Use roach traps or gels to decrease the number of cockroaches in your home.
- Furry pets. Keep pets off of the bed and outside of the bedroom of anyone with asthma. Trimming your pet's fur will not help your asthma, but vacuuming often and with a HEPA vacuum will help.
- Mold. The key to controlling mold is to reduce moisture. Keep the humidity level in your home between 35- and 50-percent. In hot humid climates, you may need to use an air conditioner or a dehumidifier or both. Repair water leaks.
- Smoke. Burning candles, smoking tobacco products, or burning wood in a fireplace may trigger an asthma attack.



You can control asthma and avoid an attack by eliminating environmental triggers and taking medicine exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to do. Learn more at www.epa.gov/asthma.

Image sources: Shutterstock and P.R. Turner

Healthy Home Hacks

Scuff Marks on your favorite leather purse, couch or chair can be removed with a regular pencil eraser. ~ Ines Beltran

Leave your shoes at the door and add a doormat by exterior doors. You will reduce your cleaning time along with tracking in fewer contaminants. ~ Pamela Turner

Remove mineral deposits from a showerhead. Fill a plastic bag halfway with white vinegar. Place it over the showerhead and secure the bag to the showerhead with a rubber band. Let it sit for about an hour. ~ Pamela Turner



Safety Tips for the Holidays

Written by Pamela Turner, FACS Housing Extension Specialist, Athens, GA

During this busy time of year, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. With a little organization and some delegation, you can all enjoy the busy season. Designate one person in the household to cover each of the tasks below. If you have a small household, you can double-up on assignments. Of course, in a household of one you get to oversee everything!



Image source: P.R. Turner

Safety Official. This person oversees the walkway and porches to make sure they are safe for the guests and delivery persons. Job duties include:

- ◇ Removing leaves, nuts, twigs, etc. from the walkways and porches.
- ◇ Making sure outdoor lighting along pathways and on the porch is in working order.
- ◇ Securing extension cords so they do not present any tripping or falling hazards.

Keeper of the Light. This person is in charge of the candles, decorative lighting, and fireplace. Job duties include:

- ◇ Making certain no candles are burning, and decorative lights are unplugged when everyone goes to bed or leaves the house. (Consider replacing burning candles with battery-operated ones.)
- ◇ Checking the batteries in the carbon monoxide (CO) detector. (If you do not have one, invest in safety and purchase a CO detector to place outside sleeping areas.)
- ◇ Keeping the area around the fireplace free from all types of combustibles. Try to keep things at least 3 feet from the fireplace.



Image source: Pixabay



Image source: P.R. Turner

Keeper of the Tree. This person is in charge of the tree. Job duties include:

- ◇ Keeping the tree watered if it is a live tree.
- ◇ Making sure all portable heaters are at least 3 feet away from the tree.
- ◇ Monitoring electrical cords to make sure pets have not chewed on them.
- ◇ Picking up decorations and ornaments that fall, or are knocked off, the tree.



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