

# Healthy Indoor Environments

*Where We Live, Learn and Play*

University of Georgia Family & Consumer Sciences ♦ Volume 1 ♦ Number 1 ♦ August 2017



Georgia Healthy Housing  
one change many impacts

## Inside this issue:

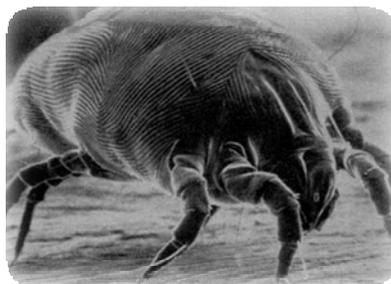
- Eliminating Pests in Your Home**
- Liquid Poison Look-Alikes**
- The Incense Test for Home Air Leaks**
- Laundry Detergent Packets and Kids Don't Mix!**
- Helpful Hints and Healthy Home Hacks**

## Eliminating Pests in Your Home

*Written by Ines Beltran, Gwinnett County FACS Agent*

There is one type of guest no one would like to have over at their house— pests! Pests are animals, insects, or other organisms that interfere with human activity. They are annoying and not at all welcome inside your home.

Luckily, there are ways to prevent pests and make your home less inviting for these little creatures.



*House Dust Mite. Image source: <http://bit.ly/2wvw9Za>*

The two main things to stop pests are to eliminate access to food and hiding places. Common insects like cockroaches, fruit flies, and ants

will visit your home less often if trash containers are covered and the trash is removed often. Vacuuming carpets and washing bedding is important to reduce dust mites. Don't attract bugs by leaving dishes unwashed and food in open containers. A pile of dirty clothes, papers, or other items should be removed, because that is the perfect place for pests to hide.

What if there are a few pests already inside your home? Many people would resort to using bug sprays and other pesticides, but some of them can be harmful, especially for people with asthma. You don't need to use bug sprays. Instead, store food in sealed containers, keep your home clean, and monitor for pests with sticky traps. Visit the National Pesticide Information Center (<http://npic.orst.edu/pest/diy.html>) for more information about DIY pest control and safe pesticides.

## Healthy Home Hacks

**Cleaning mini-blinds:** Go for the puppeteer inside you. Slip a sock over your hand and run your hand along every slat. For more cleaning power, spray the blinds with an all-purpose green cleaner.

**Decreasing dust mites:** Don't make your bed. Dust mites thrive in a warm, moist environment like your bed. Leaving your bed unmade helps reduce the moisture, which in turn reduces the mite population.

**Reducing clutter:** Every time you clean, get rid of 5 items. It could be an old receipt, shoes you no longer wear, an empty perfume bottle, or anything else you aren't using.

*~Pamela Turner, Housing Extension Specialist*

## Liquid Poison Look-Alikes

Written by Ann Centner, Early County FACS Agent

Liquid cleaning products can cause accidental poisoning, so proper measures should be taken to avoid a mishap.

In 2009, an owner of a child care center in Little Rock, Arkansas made a terrible mistake. She pulled out a plastic container of electric blue liquid, filling cups for the ten children at her center. After a few sips, the children realized the drink tasted wrong, but an ounce of the windshield wiper fluid was enough to send them to the hospital. The children had measurable methanol amounts, which can cause blindness or comas. The child care center owner failed to follow safety measures such as reading the label, separating household products from drink products, and paying careful attention to chemicals around children.

Windshield wiper fluid is just one example of how a cleaning product can be confused with a drink. Other examples of liquid poison look-alikes include confusing pine-scented cleaner with apple juice, and yellow multi-purpose cleaner with lemon sports drink.

Caregivers and parents must be sure to follow safety precautions when it comes to liquid cleaning products. Store them in locked cabinets away from drink products, read container labels for all liquids, and never reuse drink containers for poisonous chemicals.



Example of Poison Look-Alikes.  
Image source: Pamela Turner

### Resources:

- <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/FirstAid/story?id=7292295&page=1>
- <http://www.ncpoisoncenter.org/body.cfm?id=276>  
<https://t.uga.edu/3u6>

## The Incense Test for Home Air Leaks

Written by Leigh Anne Aaron, Morgan and Oconee County FACS Agent

Did you know you can reduce the heat losses in your home by up to 30 percent just by sealing air leaks? This can translate into significant savings on your heating bill this winter. A quick inexpensive way to find out how many air leaks exist in your home is to do the Incense Test. The test is easy and inexpensive, but should only be done by an adult.

On a windy day, light an incense stick and hold it upright near the closed windows and doors in your home. If the smoke travels horizontally or parallel with the floor an air leak exists. Once you find the leaky culprit, seal it with caulk or weather-stripping

that can be purchased from a local hardware store. When selecting a caulk, a latex-based caulk is a good choice since you can paint over it. If the gaps around windows and door frames are large, you could try a spray-foam product.

When checking for air leaks in your home, don't forget the attic door. Remember heat rises so if large gaps exist, you can lose a significant amount of heated air. Insulate the attic door and add weather-stripping to reduce heat losses. Another source of heat loss is the window air conditioning

*(continued on p. 3)*

## Laundry Detergent Packets and Kids Don't Mix!

Written by Laura T. Smith, Telfair County CEC/FACS Agent

Laundry detergent packets can be dangerous to children. Even though many of us enjoy the convenience of these packets, children can be poisoned more quickly and severely because of the high concentration of detergents in these packets. Between January 2013 and July 2017, poison control centers across the nation fielded more than 50,000 calls about detergent packets, and at least 6,397 children ages birth – 5 ingested detergent packets.

If your laundry routine includes any type of detergent packet, there are a few things to consider.

- Store packets in a sealed container out of children's reach
- Follow instructions on the label
- Educate others about the dangers of detergent packets
- Keep the Poison Control Number handy (1-800-222-1222), and call immediately if you suspect a child has ingested a detergent packet

Many parents overlook the laundry room when childproofing their home. The laundry room is such a busy place in most homes that young children may spend time there. The bottom line is that you should store ALL types of laundry products out of sight and reach of young children.

### The Incense Test for Home Air Leaks *(continued)*

unit. The best thing to do is remove the unit from the window during the cold months. If this isn't possible, cover it during the months it is not in use.

Adding caulk and weather-stripping are two of the easiest and least costly ways to reduce your heating bills this winter. These small changes will pay for themselves in the first year.



**Laundry packets can look like candy. Can you tell the difference?**

*Image source: Keishon Thomas.*

## Helpful Hints for Healthy Indoor Environments

### ***Hint 1: Maintaining your home***

We maintain lots of areas in life, but sometimes neglect our biggest investment – our home. Use a checklist (<https://t.uga.edu/3mH>) to inspect your home regularly. The checklist should include areas of your home such as the basement/crawl space, exterior, yard, windows/walls, roof/attic, appliances, plumbing /bathrooms, electrical, heating/cooling and garage. Spend one day this Fall to inspecting your home and making needed repairs. This will help prevent unexpected issues that could upset your budget. Take care of your investment!

~Rebecca Stackhouse, Crisp County FACS Agent

### ***Hint 2: Making your home safer***

September is Healthy Aging month, so it's a great time to make your home safer. Do something each day of the month to remove tripping hazards. Start with these 3 things: (1) Remove any extension cords stretched across walkways; (2) Move all books and magazines off the floor onto a table or shelf; and (3) Stick some anti-slip duck stickers on your tub. Learn more at <https://t.uga.edu/29M>. ~Pamela Turner, Housing Extension Specialist

### ***Hint 3: Preparing child care environments for emergencies***

September is National Preparedness month. Now is the time to create a plan so child care staff, parents, and children know what to do in case of a tornado, flood, or other disaster. Start by talking with child care staff about how to keep children safe, how to contact parents, and what supplies are needed for different emergencies. Having plans in place will reduce stress if an emergency happens. Learn more about preparing child care environments for disasters through Penn State Better Kid Care

(<http://bit.ly/EmergencyPrepChildCare>). ~Diane Bales, Human Development Extension Specialist



Co-editors: Dr. Pamela R. Turner, Housing Extension Specialist  
Dr. Diane W. Bales, Human Development Extension Specialist

This newsletter is produced by UGA Extension and supported in part by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes under the Healthy Homes Partnership Grant.

[www.georgiahealthyhousing.org](http://www.georgiahealthyhousing.org)

