

# BUYING OR RENTING A HEALTHY HOME

## Your Home and Your Health

Most Americans spend half their lives inside their home. A home provides much more than just shelter and is a place we expect to feel safe. However, some conditions that may not look serious can actually cause serious health problems: peeling paint can contain lead, too much moisture can result in mold, your neighbor's smoking may invade your home, and clutter can hide insects and rodents. Some of the most deadly hazards can be invisible such as carbon monoxide and radon. When buying or renting a home it is important to think about your health and the health of your family. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has recognized seven factors as being important to a healthy home.



## 7 PRINCIPLES OF A HEALTHY HOME

**1. Contaminant-free home:** Chemical exposures include tobacco smoke, lead, radon, and pesticides. Exposures to asbestos particles, radon gas, carbon monoxide, and second-hand tobacco smoke are far higher indoors than outside. Secondhand smoke causes an estimated 46,000 early deaths from heart disease each year in the United States among nonsmokers.



**2. Dry home:** Damp houses provide a friendly place for mites, roaches, rodents, and molds to grow. All of these are associated with asthma.



**3. Clean home:** Clean homes help reduce pests and exposure to contaminants.



**4. Pest-free home:** Exposure to mice and cockroaches increases asthma attacks in children. Pesticides pose risks for brain damage and cancer. They should be used rarely and with caution.



**5. Safe home:** Most injuries among children occur in the home. Falls are the most frequent cause of injuries to children in the home, followed by injuries from objects in the home, burns, and poisonings.



**6. Ventilated home:** Fresh air supply in a home improves respiratory health.



**7. Maintained home:** Poorly-maintained homes are at risk for moisture and pest problems. Peeling lead-based paint in housing built before 1978 is the biggest cause of lead poisoning, which affects some 240,000 U.S. children.



## Healthy Home Checklist

Is there a hidden health hazard in your home? Use the following checklist to find possible hazards.

Hazard	Signs of Hazard Check all that apply	What you can do
<p><b>Second hand smoke –</b> Smoke from the end of a burning cigarette or exhaled by someone smoking can cause asthma, breathing problems and lung cancer</p> <p>Dropped cigarettes can cause fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smell of cigarette smoke</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cigarette butts on the floor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drifting smoke from vents, windows, doors, or balconies</li> </ul>	<p>Smoking Cessation Hotline 1-866-NEW LUNG.</p> <p>Rental: Ask for a smokefree apartment; be sure it is in the lease.</p> <p>Purchase: If secondhand smoke drifts from neighbors, keep looking.</p>
<p><b>Third hand smoke –</b> Residual tobacco smoke that remains after the cigarette is extinguished</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Smell of cigarette smoke in carpets, draperies, and other upholsteries</li> </ul>	<p>Request a smokefree apartment.</p> <p>If buying home: Find home that has not been smoked in. If it has, ask for discount to cover cost of replacing carpet/flooring, window coverings, cleaning, sealing and repainting walls, etc.</p> <p>Do not allow smoking in your home.</p>
<p><b>Radon –</b> A cancer causing radioactive gas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This area is known to have high levels of radon.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> You cannot see, taste, or smell radon</li> </ul>	<p>Make sure your home is tested for radon prior to acceptance of property by management or home inspection. If present, do not move in.</p>
<p><b>Carbon Monoxide –</b> A colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that can make you very sick or kill you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gas and oil furnaces, boilers, and water heaters not working properly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Blocked chimneys</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gas appliances like ovens, stoves, or dryers not working properly</li> </ul>	<p>Make sure carbon monoxide detector is working.</p>
<p><b>Fire</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of working smoke alarm</li> </ul>	<p>Make sure smoke detector is working.</p>
<p><b>Mold –</b> Live fungi that grow on wet or damp surfaces can cause asthma and respiratory problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Visible mold or mildew</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Musty or moldy odor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Current or past water damage</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing leak</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Roof, basement, or other leak</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rotting wood</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peeling paint</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cracks in plaster</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of exhaust fans in shower/bathrooms or exhaust fans that vent into the attic or crawl space</li> </ul>	<p>Make sure mold is removed and the source of moisture is fixed.</p> <p>Have landlord or seller fix leaks before you move in.</p> <p>Keep house well ventilated.</p> <p>Make sure exhaust fans go to the outside rather than into the attic or crawl space.</p>

Hazard	Signs of Hazard Check all that apply	What you can do
<b>Lead –</b> Toxic metal that can cause learning and behavior problems in children	In Homes Built before 1978 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Peeling and chipping paint</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sloppy repair/paint jobs</li> </ul>	Ask for a lead report from the landlord or real estate agent. Have the landlord or seller make needed repairs.
<b>Asbestos –</b> Fibers that can cause lung cancer when inhaled	Homes built prior to 1990 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Vermiculite insulation*</li> </ul> <p>*Vermiculite is a natural mineral that when heated expands into a light, airy absorbent, fire retardant, odorless material ideal for insulating and gardening uses. From 1919- 1990 approximately 70% came from a mine in Libby, Montana and was marketed under the name “Zonolite.” This mine also contained an asbestos deposit which contaminated the vermiculite typically used in insulation at the time.</p> <p>Visit the EPA’s website for more information:  <a href="http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/vermfacts.pdf">http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/vermfacts.pdf</a></p>	Steps to take if you have vermiculite insulation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leave vermiculite insulation undisturbed in your attic or in your walls.</li> <li>- Do not store boxes or other items in your attic if it contains vermiculite insulation.</li> <li>- Do not allow children to play in an attic with vermiculite insulation.</li> <li>- Do not attempt to remove the insulation yourself.</li> <li>- Hire a professional asbestos contractor if you plan to remodel or conduct renovations that would disturb the vermiculite in your attic or walls to make sure the material is safely handled and/or removed.</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/verm.html">http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/verm.html</a></p>
<b>Pests –</b> Cockroaches, flies, rats, mice	Holes, cracks, gaps where pests can creep in such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Torn screens</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Broken windows</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dirty countertops</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plumbing leaks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Roof leaks</li> </ul> <p>Evidence of pests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Cockroaches</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dry rodent droppings</li> </ul>	Have landlord or seller repair any cracks and crevices. <p>If rental: does landlord use integrated pest management? (a method that reduces pesticide use)  <a href="http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/GENERAL/whatisipm.html">http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/GENERAL/whatisipm.html</a></p> <p>If purchase: review termite inspection report.</p>

# Resources in Orange County for a Healthy Home

## For Information Regarding:

### Air Quality

Free Smoking Cessation Services 1-866-NEW LUNG	Free help to quit tobacco.
American Lung Association in California– Orange County (714) 835-5864 <a href="http://www.lungusa.org/california">www.lungusa.org/california</a>	Educational resources on asthma and other lung diseases
Environmental Health: Indoor Air Quality (714) 433-6407	Mold, asbestos, radon, other chemical in the home

### Fire Safety

Orange County Fire Authority– Smoke Alarm Program (714) 573-6190 <a href="http://www.ocfa.org">www.ocfa.org</a>	Fire prevention and safety Maintaining smoke alarms
Southern California Gas Company 1800-427-2200 <a href="http://www.socalgas.com">www.socalgas.com</a>	Reporting gas appliance problems and leaks.

### Lead

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (CLPPP) (714) 567-6220 <a href="http://ochealthinfo.com/lead">http://ochealthinfo.com/lead</a>	Lead candy, toys, medicine and pottery To report unsafe home painting and remodeling
--	---

### Safety

Environmental Health: Public Pool Safety 714 433-6000 <a href="http://ochealthinfo.com/pool">http://ochealthinfo.com/pool</a>	Pool safety information Report pool suction hazards, fencing (only rental housing)
---	---

### Pest Control

Vector Control 1 (800) 734-2421 (714) 971-2421 North County (949) 654-2421 South County <a href="http://www.ocvcd.org">www.ocvcd.org</a>	Comprehensive pest control including rats, mosquitoes, house flies, fire ants
Animal Control Call 211 – To get local Animal Control	Reporting dangerous/lost animals and licensing pets

