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**THE EVERYTHING GUIDE TO A  
HEALTHY HOME**

**ALL YOU NEED TO CREATE  
A HEALTHIER HOME  
ENVIRONMENT**

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## Abstract

Housing conditions can and should support good health. But what makes a healthy home environment? The below ideologies provide a framework for describing the critical components of a healthy home.

## Getting Started

Healthy homes are:



**Dry:** Damp houses provide a nurturing environment for mites, roaches, rodents, and molds, all of which are associated with asthma.

**Clean:** Clean homes help reduce pest infestations and exposure to contaminants.

**Pest-Free:** Recent studies show a causal relationship between exposure to mice and cockroaches and asthma episodes in children; yet inappropriate treatment for pest infestations can exacerbate health problems, since pesticide residues in homes pose risks for neurological damage and cancer.

**Ventilated:** Studies show that increasing the fresh air supply in a home improves respiratory health.

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

**Contaminant-Free:** Chemical exposures include lead, radon, pesticides, volatile organic compounds, PFAS, and environmental tobacco smoke. Exposures to asbestos particles, radon gas, carbon monoxide, and secondhand tobacco smoke are far higher indoors than outside.

**Maintained:** Poorly maintained homes are at risk for moisture and pest problems. Deteriorated lead-based paint in older housing is the primary cause of lead poisoning, which affects some 535,000 children annually.

**Thermally Controlled:** Tenants and homeowners are at risk for various health problems related to prolonged exposure to excessive heat or cold when their homes do not maintain adequate temperatures.

**Accessible:** Modifications are often necessary in order for occupants to move safely in their homes. Lack of accessibility in and outside the home can result in reduced physical activity, trips, falls, isolation from family and friends, and poor mental health. New homes should be designed for the accessibility of all possible occupants, regardless of their age or mobility.

**Affordable:** Households in which more than 30% of the income is spent on housing are considered to be cost burdened; if they spend more than 50% of their income on housing, they are considered severely cost burdened. High housing cost burden can lead to housing instability in the forms of difficulty paying rents or mortgages, evictions or foreclosures, frequent moves, overcrowding, living with relatives or friends, and homelessness. The high cost of housing can drive families into substandard housing, often in unsafe neighborhoods, can lead to damaged credit, job loss, lack of nutritious food and adequate healthcare, and poor mental health.

## **I. The Importance Of Creating A Healthy And Safe Home Environment**

There are many ways you can improve your health. Eat a nutritious and balanced diet. Regularly hit the gym. Avoid sodas and other sugary drinks. But did you know you can also be healthier by changing your home environment?



Your home is where you spend a lot of time – naturally, the environment will have an impact on your wellbeing. And while you can't control every aspect of a place, there are plenty of tweaks you can make, whether it means buying non-toxic cleaners or investing in a handful of plants.

If you want to turn your house or apartment into a safe and healthy environment, follow the five tips below.





## 1. CLEAN AWAY DUST

Dust is unavoidable in any home. It gathers along shelves and ledges, leaving a fine, grey powder over your belongings. You may be tempted to ignore the dust for another day – what’s the harm, right? But studies have shown breathing in dust, like the kind that accumulates in your home, can have a negative impact on your health.

The symptoms you experience when around dust can vary, with the most common being:

- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Eye irritation
- Hay Fever

For those who have existing respiratory conditions, such as allergies, an accumulation of dust can lead to an attack, making it more difficult to breathe. To ensure you aren’t affected, have a regular cleaning schedule, at least once per week, to remove built-up particles like dust.

Take professional assistance if you lack the time, energy or patience to clean yourself. Hire professionals for regular house or end of lease cleaning in Canberra, as per requirement. Whether you choose to DIY or avail a professional service, ensure your house is clean because here’s what happens when your house remains dirty for prolonged periods.



- **Experiencing Sick Building Syndrome (SBS)**

Research shows that Australians spend 90% time indoors. You can experience the following symptoms of sick building syndrome when you are inside a house with dirty surfaces and polluted indoor air.

- ✓ Frequent headaches
- ✓ Shortness of breath or chest pain
- ✓ Cough and runny nose
- ✓ Skin itching, rashes and infections
- ✓ Humidifier fever
- ✓ Fatigue, palpitations and nosebleeds

How to know you or other household members suffer from SBS? If you experience acute health or comfort-related issues without an exact cause and only when indoors, it can be SBS.

- **Frequent Bacterial & Viral Infections**

Do you know a single bacteria can multiply 2 million times within 7 hours? Also, viruses can survive on different household surfaces from 3 hours to 2 days. Thus, your home becomes a hub of pathogens that cause mild or severe viral and bacterial infections without regular house cleaning. The germs get transmitted through common contact points, air droplets and physical touch.

To avoid household members from falling sick with these infections frequently, you must clean and disinfect your house, especially the kitchen, bathroom and living room. Cleaning then disinfecting is the professional method for sanitising homes, and experienced end of lease cleaners in Canberra follow it as well.

- **Mould Development**

Mould is notorious for growing rapidly in damp, dirty and dark places in homes. Its spores can travel anywhere and settle on the surface to proliferate rapidly. If your house gets a significant mould infestation, household members can experience severe respiratory distress, skin infections and fevers. Children and the elderly usually suffer greater health issues because of weak immune systems.

Thus, mould can develop on the floors, walls, ceilings and fixtures if you fail to clean and disinfect your house regularly.

Besides affecting your health adversely, mould development in rented property due to cleaning negligence will cost you the bond money. You can hire professionals for mould remediation and end of lease cleaning in Canberra to get a 100% bond refund. Thus, make sure to deep clean your home regularly to keep it mould-free and household members healthy.

- **Pest Infestations**

Food bits on the floors, trash in the bins and dirty household areas can attract a host of pests in your home. A poorly maintained house can have cockroaches, rodents, ants, spiders, possums, and other pests. These insects and animals can raid your food supplies, compromise the general hygiene of your home and spread illnesses.

Therefore, you must declutter your pantry every few weeks, take out the trash daily and never leave leftover food around the house. Also, develop the habit of sweeping and mopping the floors daily and vacuuming the carpets to keep them sanitary.

Note: Get pest control done along with the professional end of lease cleaning Canberra at the end of the tenancy if it was performed before the start of your rental agreement.

- **Injuries Due To Clutter**

Do you know falls were the biggest reason 40% of Australians needed hospitalisation? They usually occur in homes, and clutter is a primary culprit. A messy home also causes various other injuries and increases the risk of hospitalisation.

Therefore, you must declutter frequently and ensure your house is free of items you can trip or slip over. Develop the habit of getting rid of unwanted, broken and old items every few months. You can give them away or host garage sales to sell them and earn a few bucks.

Discard household waste responsibly by contacting your local recycling and waste management facility. Make sure recyclable and reusable items

are picked up, or you deliver them to the facility. This way, you prevent recyclable waste from ending in landfills.

A dirty house is a hub of bacteria, viruses, mould and other illness-causing pathogens. You can get sick frequently due to them and suffer from stress or anxiety when your home is messy. Therefore, you must clean your home daily and organise it.

However, if you are ending a tenancy, hire professional end of lease cleaners in Canberra to deep clean the rental property and get your bond back in full.

## **2. PURIFY YOUR AIR**

Pollutants are particles that hang in the air, invisible to the naked eye. These particles can have negative health effects, even at lower levels of exposure. Some of the most common pollutants in the air are particulate matter, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide.



**Particulate Matter:** Small particles made up of nitrates, dust, allergens and more.

- **Ozone:** Three atoms of oxygen joined together, the main component of smog.
- **Nitrogen Dioxide:** A highly reactive gas the emanates from vehicles and cigarette smoke.



- Carbon Monoxide: An odorless, colorless gas generated from motor vehicles and wood-burning heaters.

The best way to remove harmful particulates from your air is to invest in a HEPA (high-energy particulate air) filter. These filters can trap extremely small particles that other cleaning devices like vacuum cleaners can't hold.

### **3. BUY MORE PLANTS**



Plants naturally consume carbon dioxide and release oxygen back into the air. Plus, according to a NASA study, some plants are best rated for their chemical and bacteria removal ability as well as their ease of maintenance. To turn your home into an environment beneficial to your health, invest in a variety of plants.

Some of the best air purifying plants include:

- Aloe Vera
- Bamboo Palm
- Dracaena
- English Ivy

Neutralize chemicals from cleaning products and aid the prevention of seasonal allergy by adding purifying plants to your home. Even if you don't have a green thumb, plants like Aloe Vera and English Ivy are very hardy, meaning they're easy to maintain and are highly resistant to pests.

#### **4. FILTER YOUR WATER**

Everyone needs water to survive. But unfiltered tap water can be home to dangerous chemicals. Flouride and Chloride are both used to cleanse tap water of containments. While not harmful in small quantities, it's possible to be exposed to too much. Depending on where you live, your tap water could also contain dangerous levels of arsenic and aluminum, both of which have been linked to risk of disease.

Invest in a high-quality filter that removes common chemicals found in water. This will reduce the number of contaminants in your body and greatly reduce the risk of cancer, Alzheimer's disease, skin problems, liver disease and more. Filter water has also been shown to offer health benefits like better digestion, increased nutrient absorption and a boost to metabolism.

#### **5. AVOID HARMFUL CLEANERS**

Cleaning your home or apartment regularly is important. But some of the cleaners you use could be causing a problem rather than fixing it. Many store-bought cleaners contain chemicals that are toxic to your health. The most common are phthalates, triclosan, 2-butoxyethanol and perchloroethylene.

- Phthalates: Found in fragranced products like air fresheners, dish soap and toilet paper.

- Triclosan: Found in liquid dishwashing detergent and hand soaps labeled “antibacterial.”
- 2-Butoxyethanol: The key ingredient in many window, kitchen and multipurpose cleaners.
- Perchloroethylene: Also called “perc,” a neurotoxin found in spot removers and carpet cleaners.

To avoid adding more toxins to your home, search for safe cleaning alternatives. Purchase or make single-ingredient cleansers, such as those made from baking powdered, to remove dirt and germs without spraying around chemicals.

## **II. Challenges of Creating a Healthy Home in Canberra**

People have built and lived in houses for thousands of years, so what has changed, in modern times, that would cause your home to be a contributing factor to many significant health conditions?





In the past fifty years increased industrialization has led to the introduction of thousands of chemicals. These chemicals and synthetic materials are supposed to make life easier.

However, recent studies show that these modern chemicals may cause more harm than good. As well as being exposed to a cocktail of chemicals daily, there's another concern; it is getting harder every day for us to avoid them! Also:

- Modern house design lets less fresh air circulate through your rooms and is often dependent on air-conditioning for ventilation
- Water supplies are contaminated with chemical runoff from fertilizers and pesticides as well as pharmaceutical drugs including antibiotics that may have found their way into the water supply by being flushed away
- Your water supply may contain fluoride, which is now being associated with a raft of problems for babies and children as well as adults
- Think about the chemicals in personal care products including shampoo, antiperspirant, and toothpaste. These are everyday items that, applied to your body or clothing, are often sources of chemical exposure.

### **III. Are You Ready to Make the Change to Having a Healthy Home?**

#### **Making the Change to a Healthy Home**





So, what is the solution for a health-conscious person? Do you have to go back to a nomadic lifestyle to protect your health? Absolutely not!

Changing your life entirely is not the right answer or even practical. However, you might want to make some changes. Not drastic changes, but just some tweaks in the way that you take care of your home and your choice of the products you buy.

### **Are You Ready to Make the Change to Having a Healthy Home?**

Creating a healthy home does not have to be an exhausting endeavor. In fact, it can be fun! You do not have to give up your lifestyle or make extreme changes to improve your home.

Today, many non-toxic and organic products are available at your local supermarket; making it easy for you to integrate these healthier options into your home cleaning regime slowly. It is just a matter of reaching for one brand over another and today the organic one is often more efficient than the conventional one! Besides, it leaves no toxic residue and smells pleasant and natural.

At first, there may be products which you feel just do not work for you. You might try products that are supposed to be healthy alternatives; however, they do not meet your expectations.

Don't give up because the good ones are out there; it's just a matter of trying a few different ones and following suggestions that others have found



worked well. With every significant change that you make, you are reducing your exposure to health hazards.

New products are always coming onto the market, so keep trying until you find the right ones to help you create a healthy home.

#### **IV. Tips for Having a Healthy Home in Canberra**

##### **Indoor Air Quality**

We usually think of air pollution as something outdoors.

The truth is, the air inside your home, can be more hazardous to your health than the air outside.

Air indoors can be polluted by:

- Mold
- Formaldehyde
- Radon
- Carbon monoxide
- Lead
- Volatile chemicals from fragrances used in air fresheners



Opening your doors and windows can help improve your air quality. Fresh air from outside will force out the air polluted removing allergens, chemicals, and mold from your home.

**For the steps to take when improving air quality, remember “S-A-V-E”**

- **Separate**, materials that are known to be a problem by using air barriers and sealants
- **Absorb**, using indoor plants to improve air quality and to add a touch of freshness to your home
- **Ventilate**, your home as much as possible to remove air pollutants
- **Eliminate**, the source of air problems especially through better product selection and design

Using a vacuum with a HEPA Filter, you can eliminate allergens like dust mites, pet dander, and pollen from your carpet, sheets, and curtains.

### **Eliminate Unhealthy Odors**

- Avoid artificial air fresheners
- Substitute natural air fresheners which are made with essential oils
- Open a box of baking soda which will absorb odors
- Open windows to let fresh air flow
- Run a fan to create a breeze
- Identify and clean up the source of unhealthy smells

### **Some Easy Healthy-Home Basics...**

- Having a smoke-free home can also prevent inhaling unwanted toxic chemicals
- Ask people to remove their shoes when entering your home
- Have house slippers, shoes and socks available near the door to wear inside

### **Preventing Mold**

The simple solution to preventing mold is to reduce dampness and moisture in the home.

Follow up on these actions:

- Avoid wet towels on the bathroom floor
- Fix leaky pipes around the house
- Dry out leaks, spills, and other moisture issues as soon as possible
- Fix plumbing and toilet leaks
- Remove exposed surfaces of water such as drip trays under the air conditioner or refrigerator to reduce humidity and potential growth of mold

- Wipe down condensation that might have developed after your shower

### **Water Quality**

Water is essential to life. It is vital to have fresh drinking water and know where it came from, how it was treated, and whether it is safe to drink in your home

- To find out what's in your drinking water, research your tap water supplier; they publish all their water quality tests. Unfortunately, bottled water companies do not provide this information.
- Look up your city's water in "EWG's National Tap Water Atlas."
- Choose a filter certified to remove contaminants found in your drinking water
- Carbon filters are more affordable and remove common water contaminants such as lead and byproducts of the water disinfection process
- If you are not using a filter, allow chlorine to evaporate naturally in a jug. Chlorine will release out of the water if left uncovered for a day or two.
- Always change your water filters on time. Old filters harbor bacteria that can leach into your drinking water.
- If you are on the go, carry your drinking water in BPA-free or stainless-steel bottles. When a plastic bottle is old and reused constantly, it breaks down and harmful chemicals like bisphenol-A (BPA) and bacteria can contaminate your water.

### **Electronics and Radiation**

Electricity and wireless devices make our lives easier but may also affect your health. You don't need to give up the wonders of technology to have a healthy home.

Taking simple steps to protect you and your family most of the day include:

- Staying farther away from the television or computer may help reduce your level of exposure
- If you wish to purchase another computer or television screen, chose an LCD or plasma screen which emit less radiation

- Limit the number of hours you and your children use electronic screen devices each day
- Electric blankets can emit a magnetic field when placed on your body. It is best not to sleep with an electric blanket plugged in, but to warm your bed with the electric blanket before you fall asleep and make sure to turn it off and unplug the cord.
- When using electric clocks, position the clock so it is six feet (two metres) away from you and only use a bedside clock with a red display, preferably turned away from you
- A battery-operated or wind-up clock is even better to use
- There are regulations for the amount of radiation that microwaves can emit. If the microwave is damaged or not functioning correctly, it can increase your exposure. Check your microwave to make sure it is operating correctly and never lean directly against it while heating.
- Don't sleep with your mobile phone – and don't leave it on the nightstand beside the bed. The cell phone signals are now considered a potential carcinogen.
- Turn off the WiFi at night

### **Decorating and Furniture**

If you want to paint your house to give it a full makeover, milk paints are one of the healthiest alternatives because they are made from natural dried milk protein. The combination of lime, milk protein, and pigment does not contain toxic inhalants and gives your home a long-lasting color.

When buying new furniture with cushions, try to find products that are made with natural filling materials. Polyurethane foam cushions made before 2005 can easily fall apart. If you cannot dispose of these cushions, keep them covered and encased to prevent small pieces of foam from being inhaled.

### **Cookware and Storage**

Some everyday products used to prepare meals can cancel out all the health benefits you achieve when eating healthily.

Some nonstick cookware has been coated with a synthetic chemical known as Teflon. Nonstick cookware can release toxic fumes when heated at high temperatures. These fumes are linked to smaller birth weight, elevated cholesterol levels, abnormal thyroid levels, early menopause, and a suppressed immune system.

To avoid exposure to Teflon, it is best to avoid nonstick cookware. If you cannot dispose of your cookware, use the lowest possible heat to cook food and turn on the stove fan if it vents outside.

As a substitute for Teflon cookware and utensils, use glass, stainless steel, and cast iron. Ceramic is another option when purchasing.

Store food at the correct temperatures to prevent bacteria forming and avoid polystyrene plastics such as disposable plastics and takeout containers.

Polystyrene plastic contains a carcinogen that can leach into your food and drinks.

Wherever possible buy organic food products to prevent ingesting pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics and other chemicals.

### **Cleaning Products for a Healthy Home**

A clean home is a happy home and healthy as well!

When it comes to cleaning, you do not need harsh chemicals to kill microorganisms, remove dirt, and wash your clothes. There are numerous healthy natural alternatives that work very well without the toxic exposures.

For every room in your home, whether bathroom, kitchen or living room there are natural alternatives that may work for you.

Making natural cleaning products is easy and they can be made with simple ingredients found around your house. Using these natural ingredients, is often less expensive, with fewer health risks, and without the hazardous chemical exposure of store-bought regular cleaning products. Here is a link to some homemade natural cleaning product recipes

If you are unable to make your cleaning products switch to cleaners that use plant-based ingredients only. Using 100% plant-based cleaners is the safest way to prevent inhaling toxic synthetic chemicals.

Look at labels and try to find out what chemicals are in your cleaning products. Check the label and look for “Green Seal” or “Eco Logo” certification, which meets green standards.

Food items such as vinegar or lemon can be used to clean a variety of surfaces throughout your home and are effective against bacteria and mold. Hydrogen peroxide is an effective and safe alternative and has just as much germ-killing power as bleach.



## **Cosmetics and Personal Care Products**

The problem with products used on your body daily is that there isn't an independent overseeing body that is monitoring these products to make sure they are safe. Avoid ingredients that rank as high health hazard risks according to the EWG Skin Deep Cosmetic Database.

Switch to products with natural and safer ingredients or even use fewer products to reduce your chemical exposure.

Read up on companies with natural and safe product policies you respect and trust. Usually, they will be the companies whose products you feel safe buying.

## **Outdoor Living**

Keeping your garden and lawn healthy doesn't have to be difficult or require hazardous chemicals.

Avoid the use of synthetic fertilizers and weed killer.

Coffee grounds and compost make great fertilizer alternatives and removing weeds by hand is the best way to get rid of them without hazardous exposures.

Consider growing organic vegetable in your garden. With all the hard work of taking care of your garden, wouldn't it be great to receive a reward?

## **Final Words**

### ***Your Health and Your Family's Health Depend on a Healthy Home Environment***

When it comes to your health, making changes to your living environment is as important as changes to your diet.

Your home is not just a building; it is the foundation of your health.

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