

# Healthy Homes



*A community program to promote  
safe and healthy homes.*

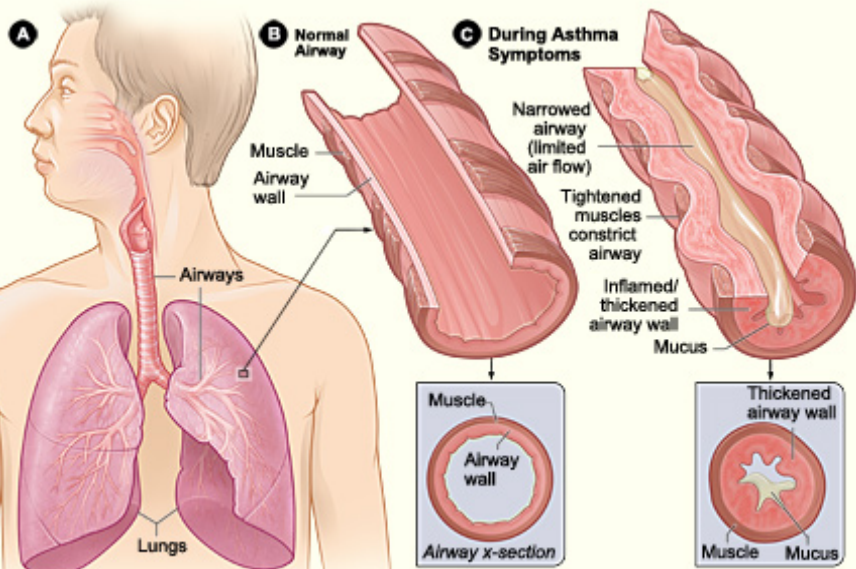


# Today's discussion will include:

- General tips for a healthy home
- Overview of asthma and asthma symptoms
- Overview of asthma triggers and how to remove them
- Resources for addressing questions and concerns about asthma
- Overview of lead poisoning prevention
- Resources for addressing questions and concerns about lead in your home



**Asthma** is a chronic condition that causes a person's airways to become inflamed, to become narrow and produce extra mucus.

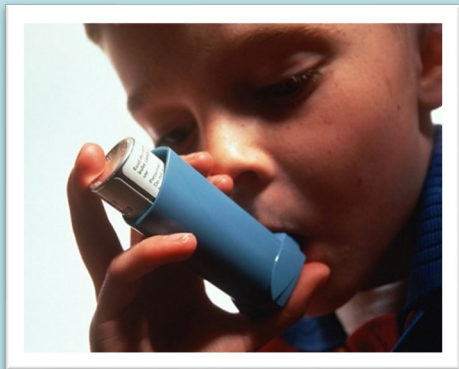


## **Symptoms** of asthma include:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness



See your doctor if you think you may have asthma.



There are effective treatments for asthma that your doctor can recommend.

It is important to make sure to follow directions about using inhalers and medication.

# **Asthma can also be managed by maintaining a healthy home**

## **Asthma triggers in your home can include:**

- Smoke
- Perfume
- Incense burning
- Candle burning
- Mold
- Pests
- Pet dander
- Fuel burning appliances
- Others



# Keeping Your Home Trigger Free:

## Smoke

- Do not allow people to smoke in your home. Have people smoke outside.
- Do not allow smoking in the car.
- Do not burn incense in your home.
- Complete the Smoke-Free Home Pledge



## **Smoke-Free Home Pledge**

Pledge to keep your home smoke-free.

Many people die each year because of smoke particles in the air in their apartment.

By taking this pledge, you are committing to keep your home smoke-free and making your family and home healthier by removing secondhand smoke.

Complete the pledge form and be eligible to sign up and receive your free smoke-free home kit.



Take the pledge here:

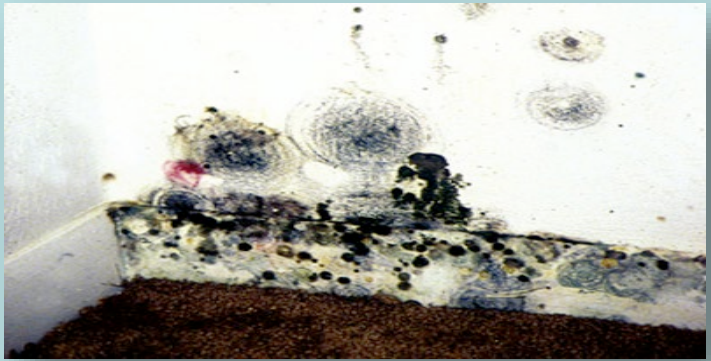
<http://smokefreeforme.org/pledge/>

Or sign a copy with your Advocate:

*I pledge to protect myself and others from the health risks of second hand smoke by keeping my home smoke-free.*



## Mold



Molds grow on moist surfaces. It is important to take action when there is too much moisture in the air.

To get rid of excess moisture in your home:

- Turn fan on when showering
- Clean up standing water
- Use a dehumidifier
- Allow for air circulation- **open windows and open curtains**
- Have your landlord fix wood, wallboard etc. that has moisture damage

# Let the fresh air in and get the bad air out!

Doing these things can address many of the issues that can cause sickness in your home.

- Open windows
- Use a fan
- Open curtains
- Do not burn substances
- Avoid heavy perfumes
- Fresh air is the best way to have a healthy home!



# Radon- Ask Your Landlord

- Your landlord is required by law to test your apartment for radon.
- Your landlord needs to tell you the radon test results before you sign paperwork.
- Why? Radon is the #1 cause of lung cancer in non-smokers and the #2 cause of cancer overall.

# Pest Control



## Dust Mites

Dust mites are tiny insects that eat dead skin. They are so small you can't see them, but their feces can trigger asthma.

- Wash bedding in hot water often
- Use allergen-proof pillow and mattress covers
- Dust surfaces throughout home
- Vacuum often
- Remove area rugs, curtains and fabric furniture – they collect dust



## Bedbugs

Bed bugs are small insects that feed on human blood. They are usually active at night when people are sleeping. They leave large, itchy skin welts.

- You **must** report to your landlord
- Clean areas where bedbugs live
- Wash and dry bedding in hot water
- Use allergen-proof pillow and mattress covers
- Throw away infested items and furniture and do not bring discarded items into home.



## Cockroaches

Cockroach dust is a very strong asthma trigger. To get rid of cockroaches:

- Remove sources of water
- Tightly seal food in cupboards
- Clean food crumbs from tables, counters and floors daily
- Kill cockroaches using bait (NOT bug bombs)
- Pick up clutter where roaches live



## **Pet Dander**

Dander is dead skin cells from animals.

Cat dander typically triggers asthma more than dog dander. To get rid of dander:

- Find a new home for the pet, if possible
- Do not allow pet in bedroom
- Bathe pet often
- Vacuum and clean often
- Wash hands and clothes after handling pet





## **Fuel Burning Appliances can be an asthma trigger:**

These include stoves, furnaces, space heaters etc. that burn fuel (wood, natural gas, kerosene).



- Use CO detectors
- Use an exhaust fan in kitchen
- Do not use stove to heat home
- If using portable space heaters they must be electric
- Non-electric space heaters must be vented outside
- Have heating system checked and chimney cleaned every year- ask landlord if applicable

## **General Resources About Asthma**

- Your Primary Care Provider, Doctor
- Asthma and Allergy Association of America: [www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)
- Maine Health Asthma Resource Center:  
[www.mainehealthlearningcenter.org](http://www.mainehealthlearningcenter.org)

## **For pests or mold in your apartment:**

- Code Enforcement:
  - Lewiston: 207-513-3125
  - Auburn: 207-333-6600
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance:  
207-784-1558

# Lead Poisoning

- Lead is a toxin that is harmful to everyone, especially children and pregnant women.
- Lead from paint, contaminated dust, paint chips, and peeling paint are common causes of lead poisoning.
- Lead paint is still present in many older homes, sometimes under layers of newer paint.



## **Lead Sources:**

- Paint, indoor and outdoor, toys
- Makeup such as lipstick
- Certain food and liquid containers
- Soil and outdoor exposure
- Drinking water
- Some folk remedies and henna dyes



Lead dust settles on floors and windowsills where children and infants can touch and ingest it by chewing on toys, putting hands in their mouths, and eating without washing their hands.

## **Health Risks:**

Brain or nerve damage, hearing problems, digestive issues, stunted growth, and more.

## Take steps to prevent lead poisoning



- Keep kids away from lead and get your children tested for lead
- Test your home and water for lead- never scrape, sand or paint without checking for lead first
- Clean up lead dust in and around your home, vacuum often and **“damp” dust**
- Healthy food can help protect your child from the harmful effects of lead



## **Inspect Your Home Annually.**

Just like people, your home needs an annual check-up. Take the time to thoroughly inspect your home inside and out.

Look for stains, wet spots, condensation, insects, insect damage, peeling paint, and overgrown trees and plants.

Look for leaks/water under kitchen and bathroom sinks, around tubs, showers, and toilets.

Report any concerns to the landlord and/or code enforcement.

## General Resources

Maine Indoor Air Quality Council: [www.maineindoorair.org](http://www.maineindoorair.org)

Healthy Homes: [www.maine.gov/healthyhomes](http://www.maine.gov/healthyhomes)

Maine Radon Program: [www.maineradiationcontrol.org](http://www.maineradiationcontrol.org)

Maine Asthma Program:

[www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/mat/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/population-health/mat/index.htm)

Maine Board of Pesticide Control:

[www.state.me.us/agriculture/pesticides/](http://www.state.me.us/agriculture/pesticides/)

Housing Authorities: Lewiston: 207-783-1424

Auburn: 207-784-7351

Code Enforcement: Lewiston: 207-513-3125

Auburn: 207-333-6600

Pine Tree Legal Assistance: 207-784-1558

Maine CDC: 866-292-3474

Healthy Androscoggin: 207-795-5990

<http://www.healthyandroscoggin.org>

**Contact your landlord with questions!**

Brought to you by:

Healthy Androscoggin &  
Environmental Protection Agency

