

Monmouth County Regional Health Commission No. 1



Winter 2010

www.mcrhc.org

732-493-9520

Help Protect Children from Environmental Risks

There are simple steps that parents and other caregivers can take to protect children from environmental health hazards in their surroundings. Here are some simple steps that can be taken to help keep children safe and healthy:

- Have your health care provider test children's blood lead levels if you live in an older home. Wash floors and window sills (where lead based paint is more likely to be found) to remove dust and peeling lead-based paint. Repair peeling or chipping paint in older homes.
- Reduce asthma attacks by controlling triggers such as pet dander, mold and second-hand smoke.
- Don't expose children to cigarette, cigar or pipe smoke at home or in a car.
- Check the local public water supplier for annual drinking water quality reports.
- Have private water wells tested annually by a certified laboratory.
- Store pesticides and other chemicals in a locked cabinet. Never put them in other containers that can be mistaken for food or drink.
- Replace mercury thermometers with digital or mercury-free thermometers.
- Homes should be tested for radon, as it is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

January is Radon Action Month

You can't see, smell, or taste radon, but it could be present at a dangerous level in your home. Radon comes from the natural (radioactive) breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water and gets into the air you breathe. Radon can be found all over the U.S. It can get into any type of building: homes, offices, and schools. But you and your family are most likely to get your greatest exposure at home, where you spend most of your time. Radon can also be in your water, especially well water. Testing the home is the only way to know if you and your family are at risk from radon. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers in America and claims the lives of about 20,000 Americans each year. Of the annual 4,700 lung cancer deaths in New

Jersey, as many as 140-250 may be associated with radon exposure. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Surgeon General urge all Americans to protect their health by testing their homes, and schools for radon. Exposure to radon is a preventable health risk, and testing radon levels in your home can help prevent unnecessary exposure. If a high radon level is detected in your home, you can take steps to fix the problem. The EPA has designated January as National Radon Action Month to increase awareness about radon health hazards and provide tips on how to protect your family. For more information please visit <http://www.epa.gov/radon/nram/>

Healthy Holiday Eating

Food is an important part of the holiday season. It's easy for normal eating patterns to take a backseat at this time of year. By following a few tips on holiday eating, you and your family can enjoy special foods while keeping a balanced and healthy diet.

- ◆ **Eat smaller portions of food.** This is especially important at a buffet, where you may want to try everything. Choose the items you want to try the most, and eat a small portion of each.
- ◆ **Eat slowly.** Many times, people eat so fast they don't have enough time to realize that they are full. Savor each bite and enjoy the taste of the food-chances are you will eat less.
- ◆ **Avoid excess alcohol and snacks.** Save your calories for the main meal. Alcohol provides many calories and virtually no nutrients. Also, try not to sit within arm's reach of tempting snack foods like cookies, potatoes chips, and cakes .
- ◆ **Offer to bring a low-calorie dish to holiday parties.** Your host might appreciate it, and you'll know that at least one healthy item will be on hand.
- ◆ **Don't park yourself in front of the buffet at a party.** Mingle! If you stand by the buffet, you'll eat more than you would if it was across the room.
- ◆ **Avoid fast food.** The holiday season can keep you on the go with little time to prepare meals. Fast food may be handy, but often is high in fat. Prepare and freeze quick, healthy meals ahead of time to stay out of the fast food trap.
- ◆ **Be realistic.** Don't try to diet during the holidays; just aim to maintain your present weight.

Moisture, Mold Control, and Prevention Tips

Mold is found both indoors and outdoors. Mold can enter your home through open doorways, windows, vents, and heating and air conditioning systems. Mold in the air outside can also attach itself to clothing, shoes, bags, pets, and can be carried indoors. **The key to mold control is moisture control.** Inside your home you can control mold growth by:

- ◆ **Keep Humidity Low**
The less humidity in the air, the less moisture, the less mold. The EPA recommends a humidity level of 30-50%.
- ◆ **Keep Your Home Leak Free**
Promptly fixing leaky roofs, windows, and pipes.
- ◆ **Clean Up Spills Quickly**
If you can clean the area within 24-48 hours, mold will probably not grow.
- ◆ **Air Conditioners**
Keep air conditioner pans clean and drain lines working correctly.
- ◆ **Increase Ventilation**
Be sure your home has enough ventilation. Use exhaust fans which vent outside your home in the kitchen and bathroom. Make sure your clothes dryer vents outside your home. Also Ventilate shower, laundry, and cooking areas.
- ◆ **Cold Pipes**
Cover those cold pipes with insulation.
- ◆ **Increase Air Temperature**
The EPA recommends increasing air temperature. Increasing your insulation may be a better overall solution. A dehumidifier is another option.
- ◆ **Keep Water Away from Foundation**
Make sure the ground slopes downward away from your home. Water pooling around the foundation of your house is a sure recipe for mold.