



## For toxins and pollutants, there's no place like home.

The average home today contains more chemicals than a typical chemistry lab 100 years ago. From bleach and other cleaning products to dry cleaning fumes, mothballs and air fresheners, the concentrations of carcinogens and toxins in your home can build up to dangerously high levels. You do have alternatives. Learn more about them today—and limit your exposure.

**1-800-464-HELP** [www.delawarehealthyhomes.org](http://www.delawarehealthyhomes.org)

**LIMIT YOUR  
EXPOSURE.**  
REDUCE YOUR CANCER RISK.



DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
Division of Public Health  
Health Systems Protection



# Make sure your home is a **healthy** one.

Did you know there are many unhealthy substances you're exposed to every day in your home? Things you'd never guess contained harmful toxins can hurt you. Protect yourself and your family. This quick fact sheet helps you learn how you can reduce your exposure and limit your cancer risk.



**CLEANING PRODUCTS**—Be a diligent label-reader. If a cleaning product is hazardous, it will say so on the label. Be aware of the words *Toxic*, *Flammable* or *Combustible*, *Corrosive* or *Strong Sensitizer*, and, of course, *Danger*,

*Poison*, *Warning* or *Caution*. The real safety of any product is difficult to know because there is no requirement to list ingredients on the product label. You'll only see cautionary words like the ones above.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Use safer alternatives for common cleaning products, and consider making your own—check online resources from the Delaware Division of Public Health for recommendations. Above all, be aware of what you are using and the potential health effects associated with cleaning products in your home. And NEVER mix chemicals or cleaners, since poisonous fumes can result.



**DRY CLEANING**—When you take that plastic bag off of your dry cleaning in your closet, you're releasing toxic chemicals into a small space—and opening the door to a cancer risk. According to the EPA, inhaling the fumes of perchloroethylene—a popular dry-cleaning solvent—can cause cancer. (Source: Environmental Protection Agency, Total Exposure Assessment Methodology [TEAM] studies)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Remove the bag from your dry cleaning to air out the clothing in a well-ventilated area before you bring it into your house.



**HERBICIDES AND PESTICIDES**—Recent studies have shown that there's a 600% greater risk of childhood leukemia when kids are exposed to pesticides. Products used to kill household pests and the ones that are spread

on your lawn can affect your children and pets. (Source: School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley; Environmental Health Investigations Branch, California Department of Health Services; Stamford University of Medicine)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Pull weeds instead of poisoning them. Use organic weed control methods to keep weeds from emerging. Always follow manufacturers' recommendations for appropriate use of pesticides. Keep children and pets out of the immediate area during and immediately following application. Remind children not to touch their eyes or mouth after playing in the yard and to wash their hands frequently.



**MOTHBALLS AND AIR FRESHENERS**—Solid air fresheners, including mothballs and gel air fresheners, can contain para-dichlorobenzene. (Source: Environmental Protection Agency, TEAM studies)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** To prevent moth damage and freshen air, use cedar chips, cedar blocks, dried lavender and whole peppercorns, or use airtight containers for storage.



**RADON**—It's a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that you can't see, smell or feel. According to the EPA, radon is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. It comes from the soil and rock beneath your home and seeps into your basement.

(Source: Environmental Protection Agency)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:**

Test your home. Kits are available in most hardware stores. You may qualify for a free test kit. Call 1-800-464-HELP for details.



**SPRAY PAINT AND PAINT STRIPPERS**—Always follow directions on the labels of these products. Some may cause cancer, reproductive problems, or damage to the liver, kidney or brain.

(Source: Environmental Protection Agency, TEAM studies)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Wear gloves and respiratory protection if needed. Avoid getting the products on your skin and use the products in well-ventilated areas, outdoors if possible.



**TOBACCO SMOKE**—Call the Delaware Quitline (1-866-409-1858) for help to stop smoking. There are more than 4,000 chemicals in secondhand tobacco smoke, the smoke breathed in by nonsmokers. According to the

American Heart Association, such exposure can cause cancer and heart and lung disease.

(Source: 1992 study, The American Heart Association's Council on Cardiopulmonary and Critical Care, and a 2002 study, International Agency for Research on Cancer—an affiliate of the World Health Organization)

**WHAT YOU CAN DO:** Ask those who smoke to take it outside. Do not allow smoking in your home or car. Insist that childcare workers not smoke around your children.

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