



COVID-19

Safer Disinfecting in your Home

Did you know?

Disinfectants like hydrogen peroxide or bleach are important to kill coronavirus on household surfaces, but they must be used safely to avoid harming health and making asthma worse.

Action Plan

- **When is disinfection needed?** All households can consider routine disinfection of “high-touch” surfaces (like doorknobs). Homes with a confirmed or possible case of COVID-19 require more thorough disinfection strategies and other [precautions](#).
- **Children with asthma are especially sensitive to bleach and other strong chemicals.** Store these products safely, away from children. When using disinfectants, open windows for fresh air, and keep children out of the area.
- **Before disinfecting:** Clean surfaces with soap + water, then wipe dry to remove dust and grime. For regular household cleaning to get rid of dust/grime and some germs (but not to kill all germs), try this recipe:

All-Purpose Cleaner for Routine Cleaning

1 cup warm water
3 drops unscented liquid soap
½ cup white vinegar

Mix ingredients in an empty spray bottle.
Use to clean various surfaces in your home with a microfiber cloth or paper towel.

- **Select a disinfectant** such as hydrogen peroxide, correctly-diluted household bleach, or another [EPA-approved disinfectant](#) for COVID-19.
- **Hydrogen peroxide (3%)** can be applied to surfaces. If using a spray bottle, use the “stream” setting (avoid using the “mist” setting). Allow surfaces to completely dry (or wipe down with a paper towel after letting it sit for 6 minutes).

[more](#) →



- **Common household or laundry bleach (5.25% or 6%)** can also be used. Use it safely:
 - **Do not use industrial strength bleach.** NEVER mix bleach and ammonia or any other cleanser - this can create toxic fumes.
 - **Safety:** Open windows for fresh air. Wear gloves. Keep children out of the area. Using too much bleach can be harmful, especially for people with asthma.
 - **Dilute it carefully:** Use a funnel to carefully dilute the bleach with cool water. Make a fresh batch daily as it can lose strength over time.

Bleach Dilution Recipe

Small Batch:
1 teaspoon household bleach +
1 cup cool water

Large Batch:
1/3 cup household bleach +
1 gallon cool water

- **Apply the diluted bleach safely:** Disinfect by carefully applying to the surface until glistening wet. If using a spray bottle, use the "stream" setting (avoid using the "mist" setting).
- **Disinfecting time:** Allow surfaces to completely dry (or wipe down with a paper towel after letting it sit for 5 to 10 minutes).

Resources

For more information, visit:

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus) and search "Cleaning & Disinfecting"

[healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) and search "Cleaners, Sanitizers, and Disinfectants"

For information from the NY State Department of Health, visit coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home

For more information visit: [nyscheck.org/covid](https://www.nyscheck.org/covid) and [nyscheck.org/rxs](https://www.nyscheck.org/rxs)

Was this information helpful? Visit bit.ly/SaferDisinfectingRx to let us know.

Version: April 2020



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New York State Children's
Environmental Health Centers





Green Cleaning

Did you know?

Routine cleaning can reduce dust, allergens, and chemicals in your home. When cleaning, use safer products, which are better for your health and the environment.

Action Plan

- For routine household cleaning of dust and grime: choose safer cleaning products with one of these labels:



- Make your own cleaners with household ingredients such as vinegar and baking soda (see recipes on next page).
- While cleaning, open windows and turn on a fan to increase airflow. Consider wearing gloves to protect your skin.
- Keep all cleaning products away from children and pets.
- Do not use chemical air fresheners. Instead, keep your home well-ventilated (open windows). Use a box of baking soda to absorb odors.
- If you need to kill germs on household surfaces: use a disinfectant such as hydrogen peroxide (3%) or diluted household bleach. For more information on how to safely use these products visit: nyscheck.org/covid

[more](#) →

[NYSHECK.ORG](https://nyscheck.org)

All-Purpose Household Cleaner

1 cup warm water
3 drops unscented liquid soap
½ cup white vinegar
Optional: add fresh lemon juice

Mix ingredients in an empty spray bottle.
Use to clean various surfaces in your home.

Sink, Tub, & Tile Cleaner

Add water to baking soda to make a paste.
Use paste to scrub surfaces.
Rinse well.

Resources

In New York State, schools are required to use “environmentally-sensitive” cleaning products. For more information, visit greencleaning.ny.gov

For more information about disinfection (to kill germs on surfaces), visit: nyscheck.org/covid

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs

Was this information helpful?
Visit bit.ly/GreenCleaningRx to let us know.



Lead Paint

Did you know?

Lead paint dust in older homes is the main way children are exposed to lead. Even low levels of lead can affect a child's learning and behavior.

Action Plan

- If your home was built before 1978, or you are not sure how old your home is, talk with your local health department or call the EPA's National Lead Information Center (1-800-424-LEAD) about getting your home tested for lead.
- Renters: If peeling paint is present, talk to your landlord. If you are unsatisfied with their response, talk with your local health or housing department, or go to www.lawhelpny.org to find free legal aid.
- Homeowners: Keep your children away from peeling paint. Fix peeling paint and make home repairs safely (your local department of health can provide information on lead-safe methods).
- Your child should get tested for lead at their 1 and 2 year old doctor visit. Older children should get tested if you are concerned about a potential lead exposure.

[more](#) →

Resources

If you are concerned about lead paint in your home, contact your local health department or visit the NYS Department of Health website: health.ny.gov/environmental/lead

To learn more about lead, visit epa.gov/lead

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Indoor Air

Did you know?

People spend about 90% of their time indoors where the air is usually 2-5 times more polluted than outdoor air.

Action Plan

- Reduce sources of pollution in your home:
 - Do not allow smoking inside.
 - If you smoke, quit: nysmokefree.com
 - Avoid air fresheners, candles, and harsh cleaners.
 - Choose “low-VOC” products (example: paints).
 - Use a stove hood while cooking. With gas stoves, use an exhaust fan vented to the outdoors.
 - Fix water leaks to prevent mold.
- Let the fresh air in! Open your windows regularly.
- Wet dust and wet mop regularly to control dust.
- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Test for radon in the basement, 1st and 2nd floors.

[more](#) →

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Resources

For strategies to improve your indoor air quality, visit epa.gov and search “Indoor Air Quality.”

Check if you qualify for a free home visit from the NY State Healthy Neighborhoods Program, visit health.ny.gov and search “Healthy Neighborhoods.”

Learn more about safe and green cleaning, visit nyc.gov/health and search “Green Cleaning.”

Learn more about carbon monoxide: cdc.gov/co

Learn more about radon testing: epa.gov/radon

For live answers to your radon questions or to purchase a radon test kit, contact:

National Radon Hotline
1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236)
sosradon.org

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Mold

Did you know?

Mold depends on moisture to grow. Mold can trigger asthma and allergy symptoms.

Action Plan

- Reduce moisture and increase ventilation (airflow): open windows slightly when showering, use exhaust fans.
- Fix water leaks. Renters, report leaks to your landlord.
- If you see mold:
 - Eliminate the source of moisture/water first.
 - Scrub mold from hard surfaces with soap and water, dry completely.
 - Avoid using bleach (unless you are cleaning sewage).
 - Do not paint over mold.
 - Discard moldy objects (like carpets).
- After a flood or water leak: remove wet items and dry the area within 48 hours.
- If mold covers over 3ft x 3ft, hire a professional mold abatement company. If you rent, report mold to your landlord. If conditions are not fixed, ask your local building department or code enforcement official to inspect your home for water damage or leaks.

[more](#) →

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Resources

Learn more about identifying and getting rid of mold:
[epa.gov/mold](https://www.epa.gov/mold)

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Cockroaches

Did you know?

Cockroaches are common indoor pests and can cause asthma and allergy symptoms.

Action Plan

- Seal cracks and crevices with caulk so they cannot enter.
- Take away their food and water supply:
 - Don't leave food out.
 - Only leave pet food out while pets are eating.
 - Store food in airtight containers.
 - Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away.
 - Wash dishes after use. Rinse recyclable containers.
 - Repair water leaks promptly.
 - Store garbage in a closed bin and remove daily.
- Decrease their hiding places by removing clutter.
- Use bait-traps or sticky traps instead of pesticide spray.

[more](#) →

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Resources

National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides information on safer pest control. Visit their website or call their free hotline:

1-800-858-7378
npic.orst.edu

To learn more about safer pest management:

epa.gov/asthma, select "Asthma Triggers: Gain Control."

health.ny.gov, search "Pesticides" and select "Pests, Pesticides & Repellents" from the search results.

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Safer Pest Control

Did you know?

The toxic chemicals in pesticides can harm human beings. Since pests can also affect health, it is important to get rid of pests safely!

Action Plan

- Prevent pests without toxic chemicals:
 - Eliminate water sources by fixing leaks and cleaning up spills.
 - Eliminate food sources by removing crumbs, sealing food containers, and emptying trash.
 - Eliminate places where pests may hide.
 - Get rid of their entry points. Seal cracks with caulk.

- If you must use chemical pesticides:
 - Place bait stations in areas inaccessible to children and pets.
 - Choose pesticides with an EPA “Safer Choice” label.
 - Ventilate your home by opening windows.
 - Never use sprays, foggers, or bug bombs.

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Resources

National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides information on safer pest control. Visit their website or call their free hotline:

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npic.orst.edu

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For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Dust Mites

Did you know?

Dust mites are bugs too tiny to see with the human eye and are found in every home. Dust mites can trigger asthma and allergies.

Action Plan

- Dust mites hide in carpets, bedding, upholstered furniture, and stuffed toys:
 - Use zippered dust-proof covers on pillows, mattresses, and box springs.
 - Wash sheets and blankets weekly.
 - Wash stuffed toys regularly. If they cannot be washed, keep them out of the sleeping area.
 - Vacuum floors and fabric-covered furniture regularly. If possible, use a vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.
- Dust mites thrive with humidity:
 - Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier to decrease humidity in your home.

[more](#) →

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Resources

To learn more about dust mites, visit epa.gov/asthma and select "Asthma Triggers: Gain Control."

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Smoking

Did you know?

Tobacco use is the # 1 cause of death and disability in the US.

Action Plan

- If you're ready, quit smoking – it's one of the most important things you can do for your health and your family's health.
 - Call the NYS Quitline at 1-866-NY-QUITS.
 - Visit nysmokefree.com
 - Visit your doctor for treatment options.
- Talk to your children about smoking or vaping. 90% of smokers start before their 18th birthday.
- If you are not a smoker, avoid e-cigarettes, which contain nicotine and can lead to addiction.

[more](#) →

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Resources

NYS Quit line: 1-866-NY-QUITS

For information on smoke-free programs and low-cost nicotine replacement therapy, visit nysmokefree.com

For more information, visit nyscheck.org/rxs





Secondhand Smoke

Did you know?

Secondhand smoke increases the risk of asthma, lung infections, ear infections, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Action Plan

- Do not allow smoking inside your home and car.
- Choose a smoke-free childcare setting.
- Reduce smoke drift from your neighbors:
 - Seal cracks or gaps in apartment floors, walls, and around pipes with silicone.
 - Put a weather strip under and around the door.
 - Ventilate your home by opening windows.
 - Wet dust and wet mop regularly to reduce household dust. This might also help to reduce chemical residues from the smoke.

[more](#) →

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Resources

NYS Quit line: 1-866-NY-QUITS

For information on smoke-free programs and low-cost nicotine replacement therapy, visit nysmokefree.com

For information on what to do if your neighbor's smoke drifts into your home, visit lung.org and search "Secondhand Smoke Apartment."

For more information, visit nyscheck.org/rxs





Vaping and E-Cigarettes

Did you know?

E-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco product among teens. They can contain nicotine (an addictive chemical), other chemicals that can damage the lung, and drugs like marijuana.

Action Plan

- Vaping and E-cigarettes are linked with severe lung disease. Discuss vaping or e-cigarette use with a doctor, especially for new symptoms (like flu-like illness with or without trouble breathing).
- Talk to your teen about the dangers of vaping and e-cigarettes. Teens who vape and use e-cigarettes are more likely to use regular cigarettes in the future.
- If you vape or use e-cigarettes, keep them and containers of liquid nicotine locked away and out of reach of children.
- If your child swallows liquid nicotine from a container, immediately go to the emergency room and call the local Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

[more](#) →

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Did You Know?

There are many types of e-cigarette products:

Vape Pens	Juul
E-Cigars	Vaping Devices
E-Hookah	Mod Systems

Resources

Encourage your teen to visit teen.smokefree.gov

For information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) visit cdc.gov and search "Electronic Cigarettes."

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Radon

Did you know?

Radon is a colorless and odorless gas that can cause lung cancer.

Action Plan

- Test your home, especially if you live below the third floor.
 - To purchase a radon test kit, call 1-800-767-7236 or visit sosradon.org
- Install a radon reduction system if high levels are detected.
 - Avoid using areas with high levels of radon for sleeping or play until you fix it.
- Have new homes tested for radon before moving in. This includes homes built to be resistant to radon.
- Do not smoke. Radon increases your risk and your family's risk of lung cancer, especially if you are a smoker.

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Resources

For live answers to your radon questions, or to purchase a radon test kit contact:

National Radon Hotline
1-800-SOS-RADON (1-800-767-7236)
sosradon.org

To learn more about radon, visit epa.gov/radon

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Noise

Did you know?

Noisy environments can impact a child's learning. Very loud noises can lead to permanent hearing loss.

Action Plan

- Avoid loud volumes on portable electronic devices, especially when using headphones.
- Choose toys that have a volume control. Tape over the speakers of very loud toys.
- Don't use firecrackers.
- If using a white noise machine to help your infant sleep, do not place it near the baby and play it at a low volume.
- Use hearing protection for you and your family at events with loud music.
- Create a quiet environment for your child to read and do homework.

[more](#) →

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Resources

Worried about your child's hearing? Speak to your child's pediatrician.

For tips on how to protect your child's hearing from the American Academy of Pediatrics, visit [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) and search "Protect Hearing."

For more information visit: [nyscheck.org/rxs](https://www.nyscheck.org/rxs)





Eat Fish Choose Wisely!

Did you know?

Seafood is an important source of nutrients, especially during pregnancy. Choose Fish Wisely to limit mercury exposure.

Action Plan

- Eat up to 3 servings per week of low-mercury fish such as **tilapia, cod, salmon, and canned light tuna**. Fish contain nutrients that support healthy brain development.

What's a serving of fish?



Adult
4 ounces



Child 4 to 7
2 ounces

Source: FDA and EPA

- Avoid fish known to be high in mercury such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish, tuna steaks, and tuna sushi.
- Check local fish advisories before eating the fish you catch. Fish caught in many NY water bodies may contain mercury and other pollutants.

[more](#) →

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Resources

For FDA and EPA advice on healthy fish consumption, visit [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov), search "Advice about Eating Fish," and select "FDA and EPA Issue Fish Consumption Advice" from the search results.

Fishing in NYS waters? For local advisories on eating your catch, visit: [health.ny.gov](https://www.health.ny.gov) and search "Eating Fish You Catch."

For more information visit: [nyscheck.org/rxs](https://www.nyscheck.org/rxs)





Well Water

Did you know?

Well water is not regulated by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The owner has to test it to make sure it is suitable for drinking.

Action Plan

- Test your well water every year. Ask your local health department about what water tests are recommended for your area.
- Only use laboratories that are certified to do drinking water testing. Contact your local health department for more information about finding a laboratory.
- If a contaminant is found to exceed health standards in your sample, your local health department can direct you about the appropriate next steps to take.

Resources

To learn more about testing and protecting your private well:

epa.gov/privatewells

ny.gov, search "Private Wells" and select "Private Wells" from the results.

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs

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BPA

Bisphenol A

Did you know?

BPA can be found in rigid plastic containers, cash register receipts, dental sealants, and the lining of food cans. BPA can affect the endocrine (hormone) system.

Action Plan

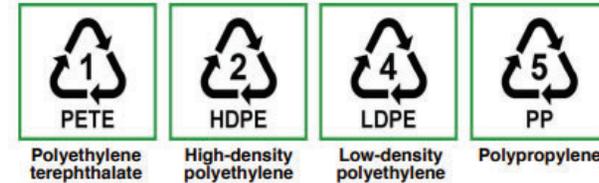
- Avoid heating plastic containers – use glass containers to heat and store food.
- Use glass or stainless steel water bottles.
- Choose fresh or frozen foods instead of canned foods.
- Choose e-receipts instead of paper receipts.
- Shop smart and check labels.
 - Avoid containers with the #7 recycling symbol or the polycarbonate “PC” label.
 - Choose products labeled “BPA-free” when possible.
 - Be Cautious: BPA is being phased out due to health concerns, and Bisphenol S (BPS) and Bisphenol F (BPF) are being used as replacements. These chemicals may also interfere with the hormone system.

[more](#) →

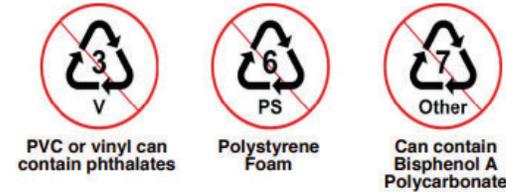
Resources

Reduce use of single-use plastics. If you choose plastics:

Choose safer plastics:



Plastics to avoid:



Source: Mount Sinai Children's Environmental Health Center

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Phthalates

Did you know?

Phthalates can be found in flexible plastics and personal care products and cleaners with fragrance. Phthalates can affect the endocrine (hormone) system.

Action Plan

- Avoid heating plastic containers – use glass containers to heat and store food.
- Reduce household dust by wet mopping and wet dusting – phthalates and other chemicals can build up in dust.
- Choose fresh foods without plastic packaging.
- Shop smart and check labels.
 - Avoid plastic food/beverage containers with #3 recycling symbol.
 - Choose personal care products without phthalates.
 - Choose “fragrance-free” personal care products and household cleaners.

[more](#) →

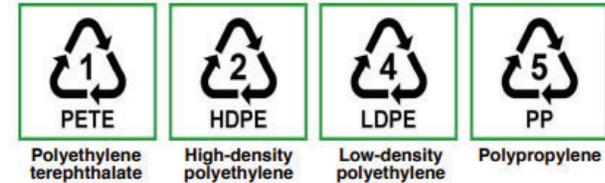
NYSHECK.ORG

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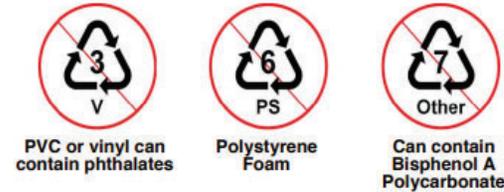
Resources

Reduce use of single-use plastics. If you choose plastics:

Choose safer plastics:



Plastics to avoid:



Source: Mount Sinai Children’s Environmental Health Center

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Outdoor Air Quality

Did you know?

Air pollution has many sources including traffic, factories, and power plants. Polluted air can cause health effects, especially in people with asthma, lung disease, or heart disease.

Action Plan

- **Check your local air quality report.** The Air Quality Index (AQI) provides information on air quality and actions you can take to protect your health (for example, limiting outdoor activity if the air quality is bad): airnow.gov.
- If possible, plan outdoor activities away from major air pollution sources like the highway.
- Help reduce air pollution in your neighborhood: take public transportation, walk or bike when possible, and don't idle your vehicle.

[more](#) →

Resources

Visit airnow.gov (or download the AirNow app) to find the Air Quality Index, a color-coded scale that shows how clean or polluted the air is:



For any AQI other than "Good", AirNow will provide guidance on how to take action to protect health (especially for sensitive groups, like children with asthma).

USG = Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

Ask your child's school to use the "Air Quality Flag Program." For more information, visit airnow.gov and scroll down to select "Flag Program."

For more information, visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Nature and Play

Did you know?

Spending time in nature provides exercise, reduces stress, improves concentration in school, and helps with healthy development.

Action Plan

- Ideas for outdoor play:
 - Free play or exploration.
 - Visit a park, playground, or nature center.
 - Take a walk around the block.
 - Ride bikes (wear a helmet!)
- Limit your child's screen time.
- Read books about nature with your child.

[more](#) →

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Resources

To learn about New York State parks and kid-friendly activities, visit parks.ny.gov

Rainy day? Find your public library: usa.gov/libraries

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Sun Safety

Did you know?

Too much sun exposure can cause skin cancer, affect your vision, age your skin, and affect your immune system.

Action Plan

- Be safe in the sun! Everyone needs protection. Wear protective gear: swim shirts, sunglasses, long sleeves, and hats with wide brims.
- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 to 30. Apply enough to all exposed areas of skin. Re-apply often, at least every 2 hours, and after swimming or sweating.
- If possible, plan your outdoor activities outside the hours of peak sun (between 10am and 4pm). Seek shade when playing outside.
- The sun is one source of Vitamin D. Given the risks of too much sun exposure, talk to your pediatrician to make sure your child is getting enough Vitamin D through their diet or vitamin supplementation.
- Sunburn? When do I call the pediatrician? Call your child's doctor if your baby is younger than one year old and gets sunburned or if your child older than one has sunburn-related blistering, pain, or fever.

[more](#) →

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Resources

For information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about how to protect your child from the sun, visit [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) and search "sunscreen"

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Teen Tanning

Did you know?

Indoor tanning will give you wrinkles and sunspots, raise your risk of getting skin cancer (including melanoma, a skin cancer that can be deadly).

Action Plan

- Love the skin you're in! You're beautiful just the way you are and tanning is very dangerous.
- Do not use tanning salons or other indoor tanning devices.
- Do not deliberately tan or burn while in the sun. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of 15 to 30. Wear protective clothing and hats.
- If you use a spray tan, still use sunscreen. You can still burn because spray tans do not contain any sunscreen.

[more](#) →

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Resources

For more information about the hazards of tanning salons, visit [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) and search "Teens and Tanning."

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs





Teen Workers

Did you know?

Every year about 70 US teens die from work injuries and another 70,000 get hurt and need to go to the emergency room.

Action Plan

- Know your rights! Learn about potentially hazardous materials, safety risks, and protection in the workplace: youthrules.gov
- Be safe! Avoid unsafe practices in the workplace. Use proper safety equipment and make sure you know how to protect yourself on the job.
- If you work with chemicals, don't track them into your home.
 - Change clothes and shoes before returning home.
 - Shower before returning home or as soon as you get home.
 - Wash work clothes separately from clothing of other household members.

Resources

To learn about the labor laws and safety regulations that protect young people in the workforce visit, YouthRules! youthrules.gov

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs

[more](#) →





Environmental Exposures

at home and work

Did you know?

Using chemicals at work or with hobbies can put families at risk for health effects.

Action Plan

- If you work with chemicals, don't track them into your home.
 - Change clothes and shoes before returning home.
 - Shower before returning home or as soon as you get home.
 - Wash work clothes separately from clothing of other household members.
- If you are pregnant, or would like to be in the future, ask about possible harmful exposures at jobs such as construction, lead battery/car work, and farm/agriculture work.
- When performing activities that may involve lead, use safety measures that reduce lead hazards to you and your family. These include home renovations, using artist paints, working with stained glass, working with lead fishing weights, and bullet casting.

[more](#) →

Resources

To learn about reducing lead exposure in your home, visit [epa.gov/lead](https://www.epa.gov/lead), under *Safety Information* select "Steps to Reduce Lead Exposures in the Home" and scroll down to "Jobs and Hobbies."

If you work with pesticides, learn more about how to prevent bringing them home: visit npic.orst.edu and search "Work."

For more information visit: nyscheck.org/rxs

