

Vol. 1

HEALTHY WORLD, HEALTHY YOU

Healthy Neighborhood



Story and Illustration by Valeria Menéndez, MPH

Tips for a Healthy Environment by Sarah Evans, PhD, MPH





**HEALTHY WORLD,
HEALTHY YOU**
Healthy Neighborhood



My name's Isabella!
I moved to NYC with my family a few years ago.

We were 3 back then...



But now we're 5!



Recently, I've learned a lot of things about how to be

HEALTHY



and now it's my turn to teach my brother all those things!



I think you should come along too!

Don't worry because I've got a plan!

We'll be meeting some friends at the Brooklyn Bridge Park
since it is near our school.

So let's learn as we go!



Before we go, I'll give you a quick lesson!

When we talk about being healthy, we'll always have to talk about the

ENVIRONMENT

Our environment is everything in the world around us.

It includes everything inside and outside of our homes like the food we eat, the air we breathe, and even the people around us!



But what does it have to do with being healthy?

Our environment can have an impact on our health.

It can help us be healthier, or make us sick.

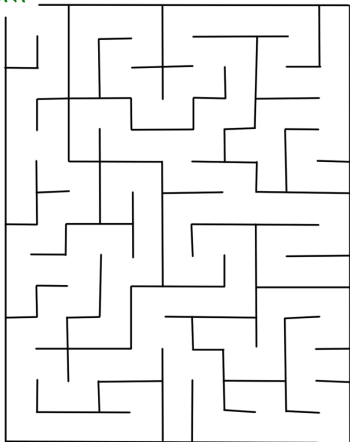


That's why we have to know which things to keep close to us
and which things to avoid completely!



Oh! Could you help me find my backpack in the house?
It's a maze in here!

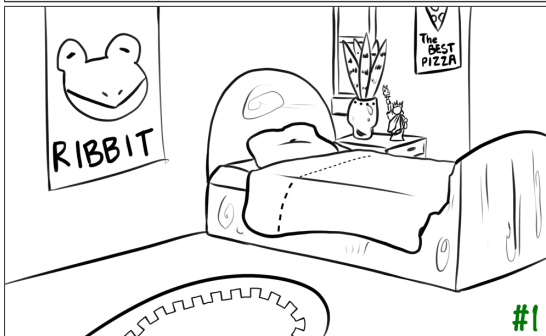
START



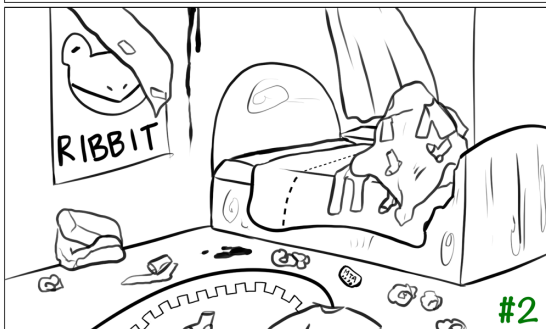
Honestly, there's a bunch of stuff we can do at home to
stay healthy! Let's go see some examples!



Out of these two rooms, which one looks better to sleep in?



OR



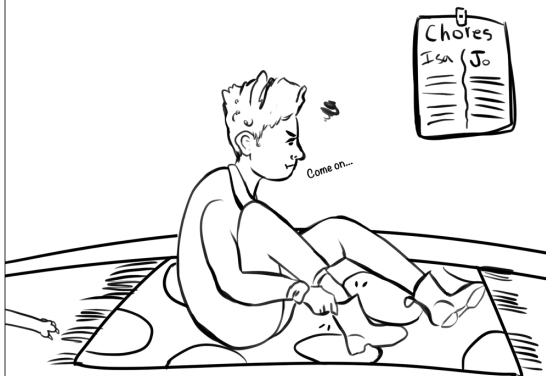
★ ★ ★ The correct answer was room #1! ★ ★ ★



Science Time!

- ★ When our rooms aren't clean, dust builds up in them.
- ★ A dusty room can make it hard to breathe, especially if you have asthma or allergies.
- ★ Kids spend as much as half their time sleeping, so it's important to keep your bedroom clean!

Now that I've got my backpack and we checked out our rooms, it's time for the **ALMOST** final step: putting on our shoes!



We take them off at the door when we come home. That way we don't spread around all the dirt from outside. We also wash our hands.



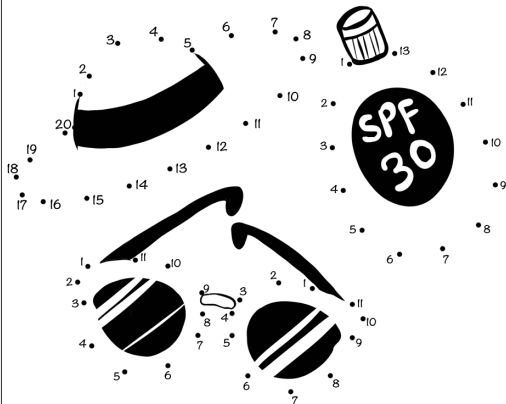
Science Time!

- ★ Scientists have found that removing your shoes when you come inside keeps chemicals like lawn pesticides from getting in your house.
- ★ Washing your hands before you eat gets rid of dirt, germs, and chemicals that aren't good for you too!

The FINAL step is to make sure we're dressed for the weather!

If it's super sunny at the park, what should we wear?

Let's connect the dots to find out!



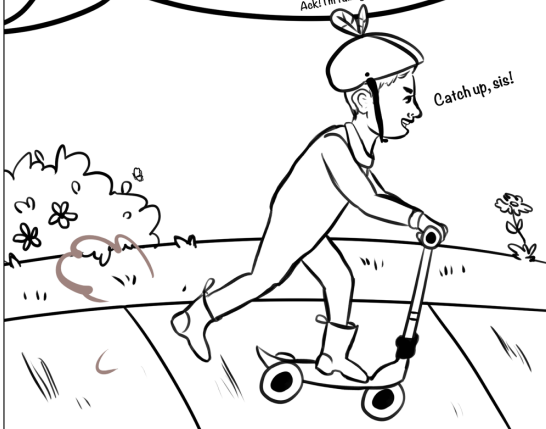
Science Time!

- ★ Everyone should wear sunscreen! People of all ages and skin tones can get skin cancer.
- ★ The safest sunscreens:
- ★ Protect against UVA and UVB rays from the sun.
 - ★ Are mineral based. Look for titanium dioxide or zinc oxide on the label.
 - ★ Are SPF 30 to 50. Higher ones aren't much better.
 - ★ Are lotions! Sprays can be breathed in and don't cover the skin as well.

Walking to places when you can is a great way to stay healthy!
You can also ride a bike, a scooter, or even skate!
My brother always takes his scooter to the park.

Aak! I'm falling behind!

Catch up, sis!



Science Time!

★ Driving cars is a major source of air pollution which can make it hard to breathe and increase the risk of asthma.

★ Air pollution is also causing climate change, which is leading to more severe storms, extreme temperatures, and other changes that affect our health.

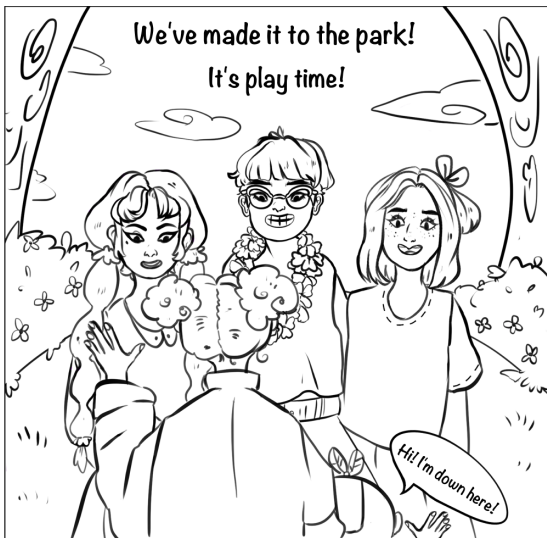
Don't forget your snacks!
When I go to the park, I take my water bottle and snacks.
If I buy something, I make sure to put it in my backpack.
That way I don't waste plastic bags that become trash.



Science Time!



- ★ The best snacks are fresh fruits and veggies!
- ★ By avoiding packaged, processed, and fast foods, and drinking water from a reusable bottle, you can decrease the amount of chemicals in your body AND protect the planet. It's a win-win!



Science Time!

★ Playing outdoors is an important part of staying healthy!

★ In a week, kids spend as much as 50 hours in front of a screen, but only around 4 outside!

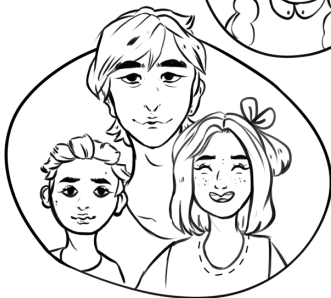
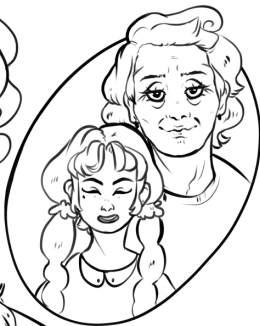
★ Outdoor play improves physical fitness, mood, attention, and behavior!
It also promotes social and emotional development.

**My final lesson is to teach your friends!
Tell them all you've learned!**



This way we can all be happy and healthy!

Family Review!



Talk to your family! Ask them questions!
Some grown-ups might have more cool information to share with you!

★ ★ 10 Tips for Grown-ups ★ ★

1. Eliminate dust!

Use a HEPA vacuum or wet mop to reduce exposure to chemicals that settle in dust. Leave your shoes at the door to avoid tracking chemicals inside.

2. Air it out!

Indoor air can be five times more polluted than outdoor air. Choose low or no-VOC paints and furniture, open windows, and turn on fans to ventilate.

3. Eat fresh!

Preparing unprocessed, fresh foods at home can decrease your exposure to hormone-disrupting phthalates and BPA. Eating organic can reduce your pesticide exposure by up to 90%.

4. Wash hands before eating!

Handwashing significantly reduces chemical exposures. Avoid soaps with added antibacterials like triclosan, a hormone disruptor, and "quats" like benzalkonium chloride, which is linked to asthma and skin irritation.

5. Choose fragrance-free products.

Artificial fragrances and perfumes can contain hundreds of chemicals that may disrupt hormones and alter brain and reproductive development.

6. Switch to nontoxic beauty and personal care products.

Choose those without phthalates, parabens, formaldehyde, and other harmful chemicals.

7. Use mineral-based sunscreens.

Choose those that contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide and provide UVA and UVB protection. Avoid spray-on sunscreens, which are less effective and can lead to harmful inhalational exposures.

8. Avoid thermal cash register receipts.

Use e-receipts whenever possible. Thermal paper contains high levels of BPA that readily absorbs through the skin.

9. Avoid chemical flame retardants.

When purchasing furniture and baby items made with polyurethane foam, look for those with a "TB117-2013, no chemical flame retardants" tag.

10. Identify ways to reduce stress!

Exposure to toxic stress worsens the impacts of chemicals and is linked to behavioral problems, asthma, and cardiovascular disease later in life.



Authors





Valeria Menéndez is an artist. Valeria is very passionate about public health and firmly believes that everyone should be able to feel healthy, happy, and loved. Valeria grew up and studied in Puerto Rico, but now lives in New York. She loves her pets, her houseplants, and the color green!



Dr. Sarah Evans is a scientist in the Department of Environmental Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. In addition to her research on how chemicals and other toxins affect children's health, Sarah often speaks at community events, including schools to educate teachers, parents, and kids on how they can be environmental health champions and make small changes with big impacts. Sarah loves to garden and composts at home. She has three awesome kids and lives in Connecticut.



Acknowledgments

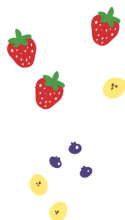


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“Healthy Neighborhood” is the first book in the *Healthy World, Healthy You* storybook series. It follows a young girl named Isabella and her younger brother Joel who live in Brooklyn, New York. Together, they explore the intersection of health and the environment and what they can do to protect their own health and that of their friends and neighbors.

This book was developed within the Department of Environmental Medicine at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. It was created by Valeria Menéndez, MPH, as a trainee in the 2019 Mount Sinai Short-Term Training Program for Minority Students (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute grant 5R25HL108857-08) in collaboration with Sarah Evans, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor in the Department of Environmental Medicine, with support from the Center on Health and Environment Across the LifeSpan (NIEHS grant P30ES023515).







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