



# Wellness News Network™

Your Source for Health & Wellness Information

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## Health in the Home

Presented by:

### Introduction

Your home is your refuge and the place where you may spend the greatest amount of time. The physical environment of your home can significantly affect your overall health, so it is important to take simple, proactive measures to ensure your home is the healthiest it can be. This edition of the Wellness Express newsletter explores several of the top things you can do to create lasting health in your home for you and your family. Your chiropractor can explain the importance of these measures in greater detail and offer other relevant suggestions about how to create a healthy and nontoxic home environment.

### Filter Your Tap Water

A tap water filter is one of the most important health purchases you can make. According to Cornell University, hundreds of manufactured chemicals have found their way into certain groundwater and other drinking water supplies since the 1970s. Leaking storage tanks and landfills, improper disposal of household and industrial products and pesticide use may account for much of this contamination.<sup>1</sup> Benefits of filtered drinking water are numerous and include better tasting and smelling drinking water, reduced risk for certain cancers and decreased likelihood of gastrointestinal problems, among others.

Installing a water filter in your shower is another important health measure. The steam you inhale during your shower may contain a significantly greater concentration of chlorine than unfiltered tap water. A 2007 study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* states that the risk for bladder cancer is slightly higher in individuals exposed to water disinfectants (especially chlorine, which gives rise to harmful trihalomethanes or THMs), through showering, bathing and swimming in pools, compared with drinking water.<sup>2</sup>



### Use Homemade Cleaning Products

Homemade cleaning products - including bathroom cleaners, personal care products, laundry detergent and dishwashing liquid - are effective and affordable to prepare and they decrease your exposure to potentially harmful substances included in conventional home cleaning products. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that levels of approximately a dozen common indoor pollutants - chemicals used as ingredients in household products,

#### QUESTION:

Indoor chemical pollutants may be higher in the home than outside by...

- A) 2 to 5 times
- B) 3 to 5 times
- C) 4 to 5 times

#### ANSWER:

A) 2 to 5 times higher

#### TRUE OR FALSE:

VOCs are more commonly found in older homes

#### ANSWER:

False

#### QUESTION:

Exposure to some indoor pollutants can cause what symptoms?

- A) Headaches
- B) Insomnia
- C) Upset stomach
- D) Dizziness

#### ANSWER:

A) & D)

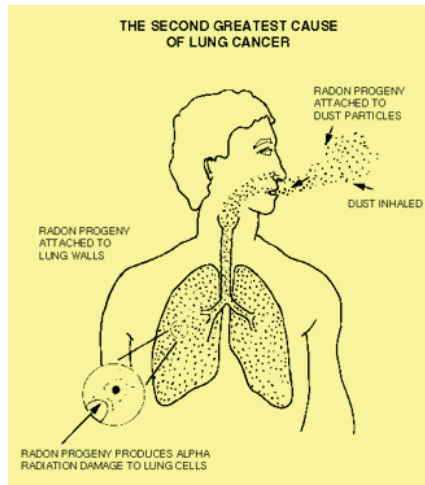
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including cleaning, disinfecting and cosmetic products - may be 2 to 5 times higher within your home than outside your home, regardless of whether you live in a rural, urban or industrial area.<sup>3</sup> Exposure to indoor pollutants, notes the EPA, may cause headaches, dizziness and eye and respiratory tract irritation. Some indoor pollutants are also known cancer-causing agents in humans.

Raleigh Briggs, author of *Make Your Place: Affordable, Sustainable Nesting Skills*, suggests mixing the following ingredients together in a spray bottle to create a natural all-purpose cleaner that can be used on anything besides glass: 1 teaspoon of liquid castile soap, 1 teaspoon of borax, 2 tablespoons of white vinegar, 2 cups of hot water, 3 drops of tea tree oil and a quarter teaspoon of both eucalyptus and lavender oil.

## Test for Radon and VOCs

Radon, the byproduct of decaying uranium or thorium, is a colorless, odorless and radioactive gas. Radon occurs naturally and usually is present in low levels in outdoor air. This gas becomes problematic when it enters your house through cracks in your foundation, through your well water or through certain building materials and begins to accumulate. Radon levels vary from region to region. According to the EPA, exposure to radon is the No. 2 cause of lung cancer among Americans, after smoking, and is responsible for about 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the United States every year.<sup>4</sup> Every home should be checked for radon. If found, radon should be dealt with promptly. Sealing cracks in your floors and walls or changing air flow patterns in your house can help.



Your chiropractor can help you find a qualified radon inspector.

Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, are another illness-inducing problem you might consider evaluating in your home. VOCs are carbon-based chemicals that are volatile at room temperature, which means they readily release gases into the air you breathe. Most homes - especially new homes - are full of items that release small quantities of VOCs like toluene, acetone and formaldehyde, such as carpet, adhesives, paints, certain plastics, cleaning products and personal care products. VOCs may cause several health problems, including nausea, loss of coordination and liver, kidney and central nervous system damage. Some VOCs may cause cancer in humans. Your chiropractor can counsel you on the steps to reduce your exposure to VOCs and create a healthier home.



## Quote to Inspire

*"There is nothing like staying at home for real comfort."*

- Jane Austen

## References and Sources:

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2. Villanueva CM, et. al. Bladder cancer and exposure to water disinfection by-products through ingestion, bathing, showering and swimming in pools. *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2007; 165(2): 148-156.
3. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Indoor Air." Accessed July 31, 2012. [http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/inside\\_story.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/inside_story.html).
4. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Radon." Accessed July 31, 2012. <http://www.epa.gov/radon/healthrisks.html>.

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