



Chemicals and pollutants in the home:

Tips for pregnancy and preparing for baby



DO IT FOR...



A HEALTHY HOME.

Follow these tips to help you stay healthy before, during and after pregnancy.



Taking care of yourself and baby

- 1 Follow Canada's food guide.** Wash fresh fruits and vegetables. Use clean, running water that is safe to drink.
 - We don't recommend washing fresh produce with soap, chlorine (bleach) or other chemicals. Fresh produce is porous and can absorb chemicals that you aren't meant to eat.
- 2** If you are you concerned about lead or other metals in your drinking water, **let the tap water run until it's cold before using it for drinking, cooking, or making baby food.** This can help reduce the risk of exposure to lead and other metals from your plumbing. Lead can cause many harmful health effects, especially to your brain, nervous system, blood system and kidneys. Exposure to lead, even at low levels, poses the greatest risk to children because their bodies are still developing.
- 3 Choose fish that are low in mercury** like salmon, rainbow trout or char. This lets you take advantage of the benefits of eating fish while minimizing the risks from mercury. Follow Health Canada's advice for fish that are more of a concern when it comes to mercury. These fish include fresh and frozen tuna, canned albacore tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and escolar.
- 4 Avoid drinking alcohol, smoking, vaping and taking recreational drugs.** These can affect your baby's healthy growth and development.
- 5 Use glass, ceramic and plastic containers and plastic wrap that are labelled microwave safe.** Single-use containers, like margarine or yogurt tubs, tend to warp or melt in the microwave, potentially causing harmful chemicals to leach into your food.



Washing your hands often helps to prevent infection and reduce exposure to harmful substances.

- 6** **Avoid pouring hot liquids** into plastic containers not intended for holding hot food. The heat may allow chemicals in the plastic to leach into your food.
- 7** **Store food** in food-grade containers, such as glass or stainless steel.

- 8** **Avoid inhaling loose powders** containing talc, as it may be harmful to your lungs. Using products containing talc on the female genital area may cause ovarian cancer.



Maintaining a healthy home

- 1** **Wash your hands** with soap and warm, running water for at least 20 seconds before and after touching food, and after using the washroom, changing diapers or touching, feeding or cleaning-up after pets.
 - Washing your hands often helps to prevent infection and reduce exposure to harmful substances. In most cases, you don't need antibacterial or antimicrobial soap for safe, effective hand hygiene.

- 2** **Take off your shoes in your home.** When you are outside, your shoes can pick up dirt and harmful chemicals, which you can track into your home.



- 3** **Read the label** and follow all instructions for safety, use and disposal when using household chemical products.
 - Never mix household chemical products together. Some mixtures, such as bleach and ammonia, can produce harmful gases.
 - Look for and understand hazard symbols found on the front of household chemical products.
 - Store these products tightly closed in their original containers. Keep them safely locked away and out of reach and sight of children and pets.
 - Call a poison centre or your healthcare provider right away if you suspect someone has been harmed by a household chemical product.

4 Keep dust and dirt away. Clean hard floors and surfaces with a wet cloth or mop to remove dust and dirt. If possible, use a vacuum with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to trap small particles, including dust.

- Exposure to dust and dust mites can cause allergic reactions and trigger pre-existing health conditions, such as asthma.

5 Keep your home well ventilated by opening the windows or running your kitchen or bathroom exhaust fan when using household chemical products.

6 Reduce the use of candles and incense, as they can be a source of particles and other indoor air pollutants. Particles typically consist of smoke, soot, liquid or solid particles in aerosol, or biological matter like mould, bacteria, pollen and animal dander. They can be harmful to your health if you inhale them.

7 Make your home and your vehicle smoke-free. You and your baby inhale toxic chemicals found in tobacco and cannabis smoke when you breathe in second-hand smoke. Non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke have an increased risk of lung cancer, coronary heart disease and respiratory illnesses. Smoking and being exposed to second-hand smoke while pregnant results in serious risks for both the pregnant person and the fetus.

8 Install certified smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Buy smoke and CO alarms with a Canadian certification mark such as CSA, cUL, ULC or cETL, directly on the product. Install at least one CO alarm particularly in hallways near bedrooms, preferably one per floor. Test your smoke and CO alarms regularly. Replace the batteries and the alarm itself as recommended by the manufacturer. Exposure to CO can lead to health problems ranging from tiredness and headaches to chest pain and even death, depending on how much CO is in the air.

9 Test your home for radon. Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Do a long-term radon test for three months to measure the level of radon in your home. The results will help determine whether you need to reduce the radon level in your home. Follow test kit instructions to place the detector in the lowest level of your home (basement or first floor) where you spend at least four hours a day. Exposure to radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.



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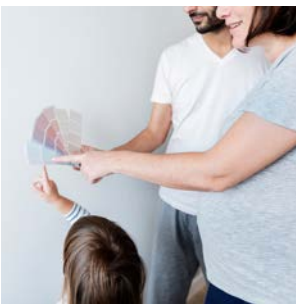


Preparing a space for your baby

- 1 It's best if you aren't present during renovations**, whether this includes painting, wallpapering or full room demolitions. If this isn't possible, avoid the area where work is happening. You shouldn't return until the area is completely cleaned up and all fumes are gone. You may be at greater risk from the chemicals used and released during renovations.
- 2** If you choose to take on a project, be sure to **wear the recommended personal protective equipment** such as protective clothing, gloves, goggles and masks if you are near chemicals or the renovation site.
- 3** **Open windows** or **use exhaust fans** to keep your home well ventilated during and after projects and renovations.
- 4** Use products labelled "**low-emission**" or "**low VOC**" as they may give off fewer volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
 - Paint, varnish and glues often have a noticeable smell that comes from emissions containing VOCs. VOCs can cause breathing problems, headaches, and irritation to the eyes, nose and throat.
 - Choose composite wood products that have met established formaldehyde limits. These products will have a "TSCA Title VI compliant" label statement. Composite wood products include furniture, cabinets, countertops and flooring. Formaldehyde is a common VOC.

**For more information on keeping
a healthy home, please visit
Canada.ca/healthy-home**

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