



# *Health Tips for Your Home*



**YOUR HOME**  
Safe • Healthy

# Health Tips for Your Home

## Table of Contents

### **Food Handling & Housekeeping . . . . . 2**

Food Safety  
Housekeeping  
Dust Allergies  
Pest Control

### **Air Quality . . . . . 6**

Mold and Mildew  
Chemicals  
Radon  
Asbestos  
Asthma

### **Injury Prevention . . . . . 10**

Slips, Trips and Falls  
Suffocation, Strangling, and Choking  
Water Safety  
Firearm Safety

### **Fire and Electrical Safety . . . . . 14**

Fire and Burn Prevention  
Electrical Safety  
Lightning  
Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters

### **Poison Prevention . . . . . 18**

Handling and Storing Toxic Chemicals and Drugs  
Living with Lead-Based Paint  
Mercury in Your Home  
Hazardous Household Waste

### **Crime Prevention . . . . . 22**

Home Security  
Personal Protection

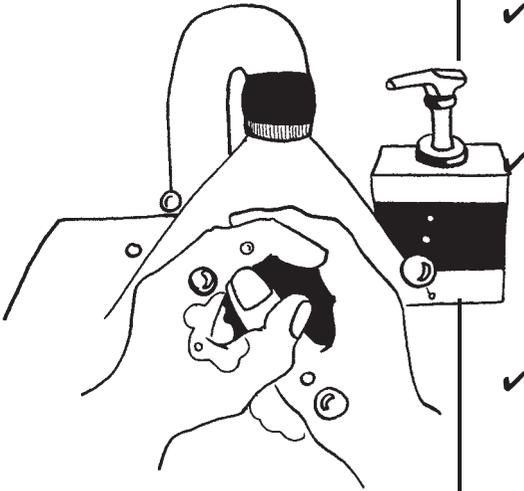
### **Drinking Water . . . . . 26**

Know Your Water Supply  
Water Quality Testing  
Common Water Supply Problems

# Food Handling & Housekeeping

In the United States, food-borne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, and 5,000 deaths each year.

Most of the victims are very young, very old, or have weakened immune systems. By storing and cooking foods safely and keeping your kitchen clean, you can reduce your family's risk of becoming ill.



## *Healthy home tips on food handling*

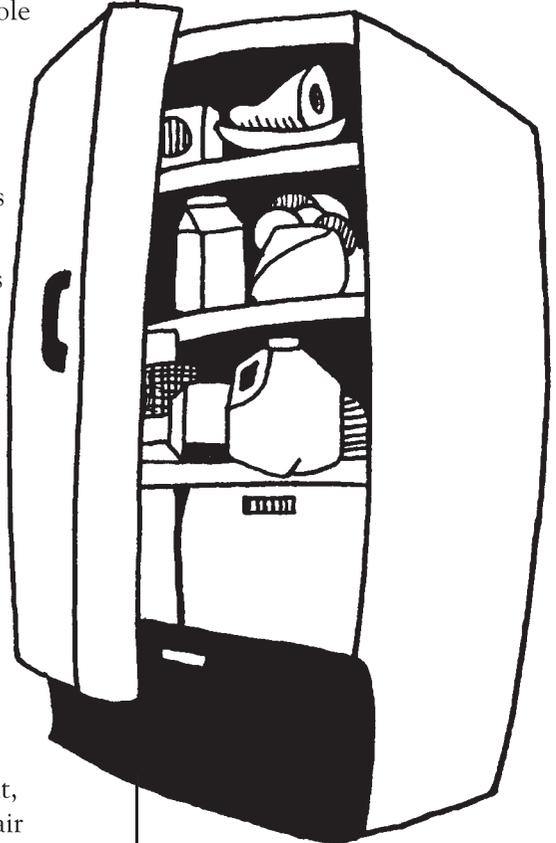
- ✓ Avoid cross contamination. Wash your hands every time before coming into contact with food. Wash hands/utensils after handling raw meat, fish, or poultry.
  - ✓ Wash your hands often. Use soap and warm water to wash, and paper towels or clean cloth towels to dry your hands. Research has proven that frequent hand washing is the most effective way to prevent food-borne illnesses.
  - ✓ Keep perishable foods refrigerated or frozen until they are used. Thaw frozen items in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or a microwave (as part of the continuing cooking process). Marinate food in the refrigerator.
  - ✓ Make sure the temperature in your refrigerator is below 40 degrees F. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator and check it often. Adjust the thermostat to a cooler setting if necessary.
- Examine foods and all date labeling. Buy foods with the longest period to the expiration date. Don't buy food items if the packaging is damaged. Throw away foods that don't look and smell fresh. A change in the odor or appearance of foods is often a sign of spoilage. Throw away eggs with cracked shells.
- ✓ Be sure cutting boards and knives are thoroughly scrubbed and washed with soapy water after each use. These items can easily transfer disease-causing bacteria from raw meats and poultry to vegetables, fruit, or cooked meat. Use different cutting boards for raw and ready-to-eat foods.
  - ✓ Don't use marinades that have come into contact with raw meat or poultry as dips or for basting. If you want to use the marinade for these purposes, boil it first or prepare a separate portion for that use.
  - ✓ Store raw meat, poultry, and fish in the meat drawer of your refrigerator or in tightly sealed

plastic bags to prevent juices from leaking onto other foods. Thaw frozen meats, fish and poultry in a pan on the lowest shelf so that juices won't drip onto other foods.

- ✓ Cover ready-to-eat foods in the fridge to protect them from cross-contamination by raw meats or unclean surfaces.
- ✓ Use effective and protective plastics for freezing foods.
- ✓ Use a meat thermometer to be sure meats are thoroughly cooked, especially ground meats from combined sources, like hamburger. Beef, lamb, and pork should reach an internal temperature of at least 160 degrees F. Juices should run clear and there should be no sign of pink inside the meat. Poultry should reach an internal temperature of 170 (breasts) to 180 (whole birds and thighs) degrees F.
- ✓ Cook all seafood. Avoid eating raw fish, raw clams, oysters, and mussels. The US Food and Drug Administration recommends cooking seafood to an internal temperature of 145 degrees F for 15 seconds.
- ✓ Cook eggs until the whites are firm and the yolks begin to harden. Don't eat foods that contain raw eggs such as cookie dough, egg dressings, eggnog, or homemade mayonnaise. Pasteurized egg products are available that can be used safely to prepare these foods.
- ✓ To prevent illness, hot foods should be held at 140 degrees F or higher and cold foods should be held at 40 degrees F or lower until they are served.
- ✓ Cool foods rapidly before storage. If you are preparing large quantities of food for later use, cool the food rapidly. Some methods include: placing the container in an ice-water bath, dividing the food into several small containers before refrigerating, including ice as an ingredient, stirring with an ice wand, and providing greater air circulation around the product container.

## Food safety

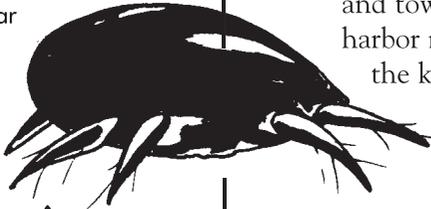
Meats, poultry, fish, dairy products, and eggs can spoil quickly. These foods naturally contain bacteria that can cause illness if the foods are not stored or cooked properly.



## Housekeeping

Many harmful germs can survive for several hours on kitchen surfaces. Reduce your risk of illness by keeping cutting boards, countertops, utensils, dishcloths, and towels clean. Don't use sponges in the kitchen. They tend to collect small food particles and are difficult to clean.

Use a weak chlorine bleach solution [2 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water] as a kitchen sanitizer. You may want to keep a supply of this solution in a spray bottle near the sink.



## Dust allergies

Household dust contains many substances that can cause allergies, including animal dander, dust mite residues, molds, and plant pollens.

Room-sized and whole-house air filtration systems can reduce dust levels in your home.

Frequent damp mopping, vacuuming, and dusting are also important dust-control measures.

### *Healthy home tips on housekeeping*

- ✓ Clean and disinfect bathroom toilet bowls and seats, sinks, counters and tubs at least weekly.
- ✓ Disinfect cutting boards. Clean cutting boards in hot, soapy water using a scrub brush to remove food particles and germs that are lodged in the tiny crevices and cuts. Then spray the boards with a weak chlorine bleach solution, rinse, and allow them to air dry.
- ✓ Keep sink disposals and dishwashers free of food debris. Keep counters and tabletops clean. Clean counters and tabletops after they are used for food preparation. A weak bleach solution can be used to sanitize these surfaces.
- ✓ Start each cooking session with a clean dishcloth and towel. Damp sponges and dishcloths can harbor millions of germs. Avoid using sponges in the kitchen and launder dishcloths and towels frequently.
- ✓ Remove trash/rubbish each day to discourage insects and other pests from entering your home.
- ✓ Use disposable paper towels to wipe up juices from raw meat, poultry, or fish.
- ✓ Wipe up spills in the refrigerator immediately.

---

### *Healthy home tips for allergy sufferers*

- ✓ Install an air filter on your heating system.
- ✓ Remove draperies, book collections, stuffed animals, and carpets from the bedroom of an allergy sufferer.
- ✓ Use dust-proof mattress and pillow covers.
- ✓ Avoid feather and down-filled pillows and comforters.

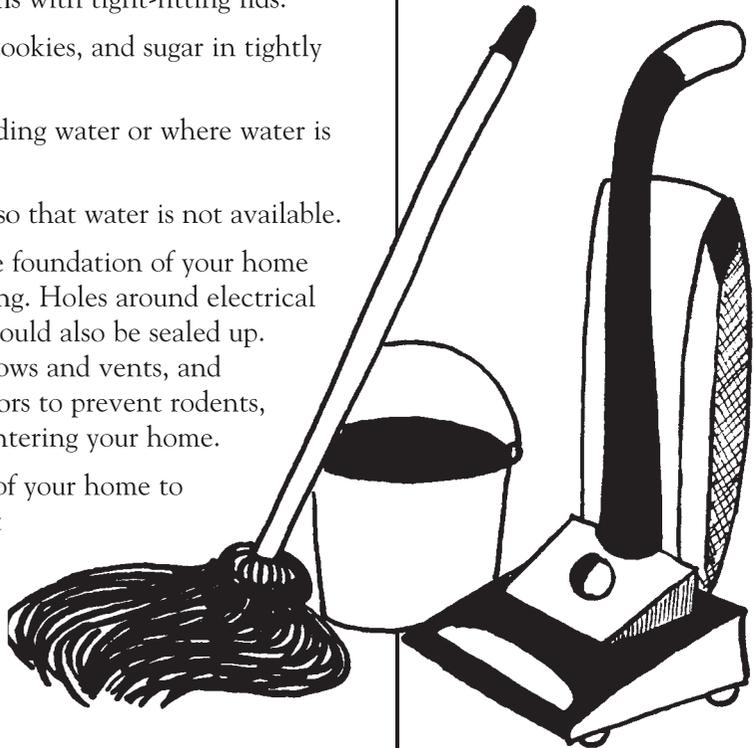
## Pest control

Insects, mice and other pests enter homes in search of food, water, and shelter. Once inside, they can be a nuisance and may even pose a health hazard. Discourage insects, rodents, and other pests from taking up residence in your home by limiting their access to food and water.

---

### *Healthy home tips on pest control*

- ✓ Keep countertops clean and wash dishes promptly after meals.
- ✓ Remove trash every day. Store trash outdoors in rodent-proof garbage cans with tight-fitting lids.
- ✓ Keep cereals, crackers, cookies, and sugar in tightly sealed containers.
- ✓ Remove all sites of standing water or where water is likely to puddle.
- ✓ Correct plumbing leaks so that water is not available.
- ✓ Caulk cracks around the foundation of your home and repair damaged siding. Holes around electrical and plumbing outlets should also be sealed up. Use screens on all windows and vents, and tight-fitting external doors to prevent rodents, bats, and insects from entering your home.
- ✓ Lower the temperature of your home to discourage insect/rodent attraction, harborage, and reproduction.
- ✓ Avoid feeding wildlife around your home as it attracts undesirable rodents/insects.



Since most pesticides are toxic and can trigger allergies or asthma attacks, they should be used only as a last resort. Apply pesticides carefully following the directions on the label. If you have a question about the safe use or disposal of a pesticide, contact the manufacturer. A toll-free telephone number and address are usually listed on the product label.

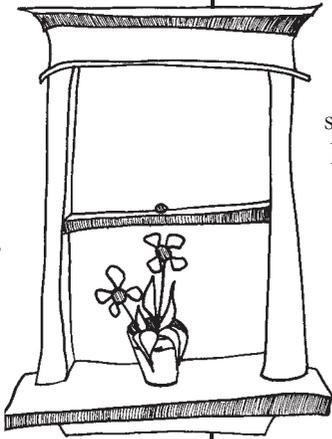
# Air Quality

## Poor air quality can cause a variety of health problems

Smoke and other combustion byproducts can irritate the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and throat and cause shortness of breath.

Exposure can lower your resistance to cold and flu viruses and worsen the symptoms of asthma and emphysema.

Carbon monoxide from home heating systems causes approximately 200 deaths a year in the United States.



The quality of the air inside your home can affect your family's comfort and health. The temperature and humidity levels should be controlled and the air should be clean and free of harmful chemicals. Poor ventilation (either too much or too little) may contribute to air quality problems. Good ventilation disperses harmful chemicals and controls humidity. Symptoms associated with poor air quality include stuffy nose, sore throat, burning eyes, headaches, and fatigue. People who have asthma, respiratory allergies, or emphysema are especially sensitive to air quality problems.

---

### *Healthy home tips on smoke and combustion byproducts*

- ✓ Ban tobacco products from your home. If you smoke, try to quit or smoke outside your home.
- ✓ Install a carbon monoxide detector near the bedrooms of your home.
- ✓ Have your gas appliances and chimneys inspected every year to make sure that they are functioning properly. Replace furnace filters each fall. Maintain your gas-powered clothes dryers, ranges, and water heaters according to the manufacturer's directions.
- ✓ Be sure that wood-burning fireplaces and stoves are vented properly so that smoke and carbon monoxide do not buildup or accumulate in your home. Don't burn treated wood or waste building materials in your stove or fireplace.
- ✓ Never allow a car or other gasoline engine to idle inside a garage or carport.
- ✓ Never use a charcoal grill indoors or in an enclosed area.
- ✓ Provide sufficient combustion air sources for fuel appliances to manufacturers specifications.

### *Healthy home tips on mold and mildew*

- ✓ Control humidity. Most experts recommend using a dehumidifier during the summer months to reduce humidity levels. Use exhaust fans to vent moisture from the kitchen and bathroom. Be sure the clothes dryer is vented to the outdoors and that the vent pipe is not clogged or obstructed.
- ✓ Fix plumbing leaks and moisture problems in basements before a mold or mildew problem occurs.
- ✓ Don't store firewood inside your home. Bark-covered logs contain millions of mold spores and provide a great place for molds to grow.

---

### *Healthy home tips on volatile chemicals*

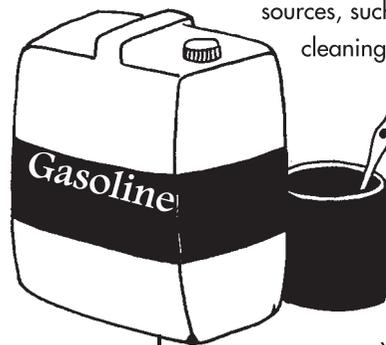
- ✓ Ask your builder or sales representative to show you alternative products that are low in volatile chemicals.
- ✓ Increase the amount of outdoor air that enters your home. Most home heating and cooling systems do not bring fresh air into the house. By opening windows and using window and attic fans, when weather permits, you can increase the ventilation in your home and reduce your family's exposure to indoor air pollutants.
- ✓ Choose low-toxicity products. Look for paints, cleansers, and other household products that are low in volatile chemicals and other toxic ingredients.
- ✓ Read product labels. These will tell you whether products can be used safely in a poorly ventilated, indoor space. The label may also tell you whether the product contains chemicals that can cause cancer or other health problems. Choose the product with the fewest warnings.

## **Mold and mildew**

Mold and mildew thrive in damp, poorly vented environments. Exposure to these agents can cause upper respiratory problems—especially in people who have allergies or asthma. By controlling humidity and correcting plumbing leaks and condensation problems, you can prevent the growth of molds and mildew in your home.

## **Volatile organic chemicals (VOCs)**

VOCs can enter the air in your home from a variety of sources, such as paints, cleaning solvents, pressed wood, new carpets and upholstery fabrics. These chemicals can irritate your eyes, throat, and nasal passages and cause symptoms of dizziness, headache, and fatigue.



# Radon

Radon is a colorless, odorless, gas in the soil under your home that can seep into your home through cracks in the foundation. Exposure to radon causes thousands of lung-cancer deaths in the U.S. each year. Only smoking causes more. Because radon can exist anywhere in Wisconsin, all homes should be tested.



# Asbestos

Asbestos has been used in many building materials such as heating system insulation, pipe wrap, pipe lagging (plaster-type covering), floor tiles, slate siding, slate shingles, ceiling tiles, and may be found in vermiculite insulation. Asbestos becomes a problem when these materials are deteriorated, damaged, or disturbed and asbestos fibers are released into the air. Breathing air that contains asbestos can increase your risk of cancer.

## *Healthy home tips on radon*

- ✓ Test your home for radon. Many hardware and home supply stores sell low-cost, short-term testing kits. Your local health department may also have testing kits. Look for a kit that displays the phrase “Meets EPA Requirements” on the package. Conduct the test on the lowest floor of your home that is lived-in. If the radon level is less than 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L), no follow up is needed.
- ✓ If the level is above 4 pCi/L, repeat the short-term test or do a yearlong test to determine the average radon level in your home.
- ✓ Take corrective steps if the second reading is also above 4 pCi/L. Call the Radon Information Center at 1-888-LOW RADON, contact your local public health office for additional information, or see the website [www.lowradon.org](http://www.lowradon.org) for information on radon in Wisconsin.

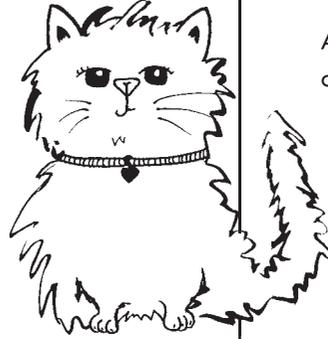
---

## *Healthy home tips on asbestos*

- ✓ Have a certified asbestos inspector inspect your home and analyze materials to determine whether they contain asbestos. If asbestos is present and in good condition, it may be best to manage it without removal.
- ✓ Don't try to remove asbestos by yourself. This job should only be done by a trained and licensed professional.
- ✓ Call the Wisconsin Environmental and Occupational Health Asbestos Program at 608 261-6876 for more information.

## Healthy home tips for asthma sufferers

- ✓ Limit exposure to animal dander. If the asthma sufferer is allergic to cats or dogs, the family pet may need to be removed from the home. If this is not feasible, ban the animal from the sufferer's bedroom.
- ✓ Consider adding a high efficiency air filter to your home's heating system.
- ✓ Control humidity. By keeping the relative humidity level below 50% and correcting moisture problems, you can reduce the growth of dust mites, molds, and mildew in your home.



- ✓ Reduce the level of respiratory irritants such as tobacco smoke, wood smoke, solvents, and pollen in your home.

- ✓ Eliminate cockroaches. This can be done by regular careful cleaning (especially of the kitchen area), daily trash

removal, and—if needed—a professional pest control program.

- ✓ Control dust. Damp mop, damp dust, and vacuum frequently. Encase mattresses and pillows with dust-proof covers. Remove carpeting, draperies, book collections, stuffed animals, and feather or down-filled pillows and comforters from the asthma sufferer's bedroom. Wash bedding once a week using hot water to kill dust mites.



## Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disorder of the airways that causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and cough.

More than 3,000 children and young adults are hospitalized every year in Wisconsin due to asthma.

Biological pollutants, such as pet dander, molds, pollens, and cockroach allergens can trigger the symptoms of asthma.

Exposure to lung irritants, such as smoke, solvents, ozone, and automotive exhaust can also contribute to this disease.

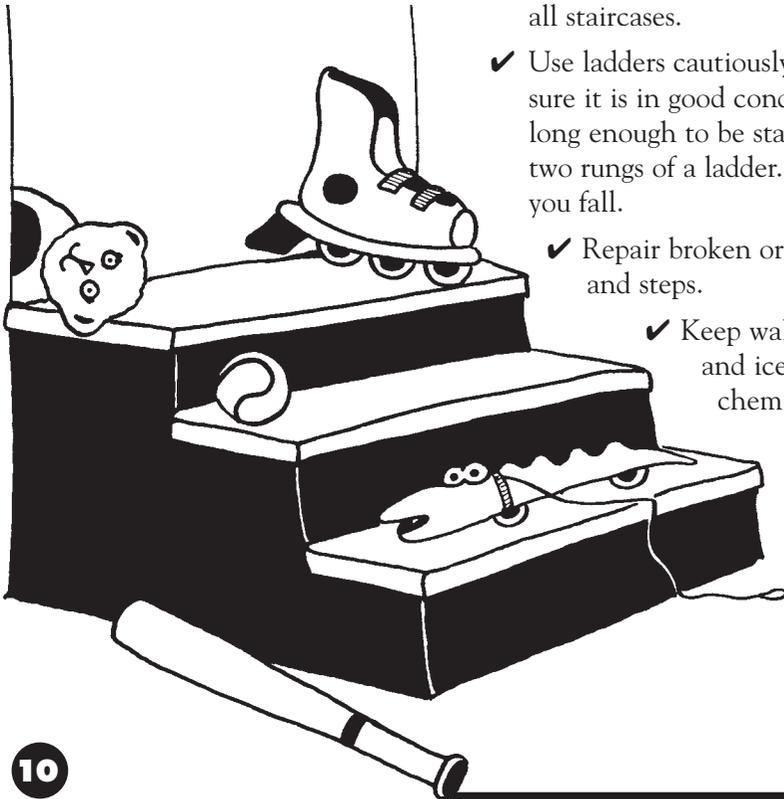
# Injury Prevention

Your home should provide a safe place for your family to live. But does it? The most recent studies indicate that homes are not as safe as we might think.

Across the United States, 20,000 deaths and nearly 25 million injuries occur in homes each year. About 80,000 of these injuries cause some permanent impairment.

## *Healthy home tips to reduce the risk of falls*

- ✓ Use slip-resistant coverings on hard-surfaced floors.
- ✓ Avoid overly thick carpets and rugs with confusing patterns, especially on stairs.
- ✓ Replace loose, torn, or frayed floor coverings.
- ✓ Inspect wooden stairs and floors and replace sections that are broken, warped, or rotted.
- ✓ Keep stairs and walkways clear of electrical cords, toys, and other clutter.
- ✓ Be sure outdoors or inside stairs and hallways are well lit and free of shadows.
- ✓ Install sturdy full-length handrails on both sides of all staircases.
- ✓ Use ladders cautiously. Before climbing a ladder, be sure it is in good condition, securely placed, and long enough to be stable. Never stand on the top two rungs of a ladder. Have a friend nearby in case you fall.
- ✓ Repair broken or uneven concrete in walks and steps.
- ✓ Keep walks and steps clear of snow and ice in winter. Spread sand or chemical melts on icy spots.
- ✓ Keep garden hoses, toys, skateboards, and other items off walks and steps.
- ✓ Install non-slip strips or mats and grab bars in the bathtub or shower.

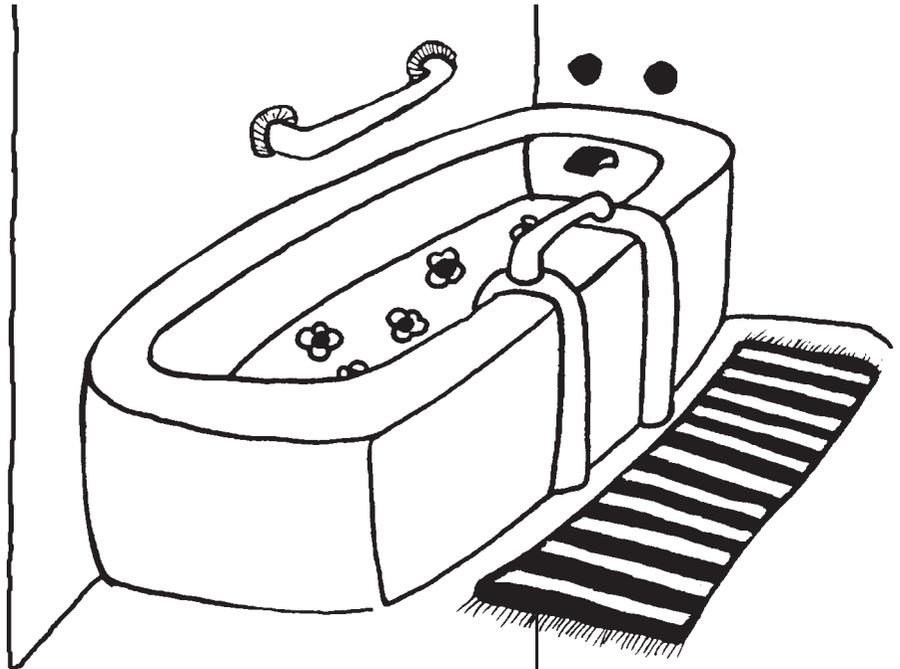


### *Protect young children from falls*

- ✓ Don't allow children to jump or wrestle on beds or other furniture.
- ✓ Install rails on their beds to prevent young children from falling during their sleep.
- ✓ Don't use infant walkers. These cause many serious injuries each year, especially on stairs.
- ✓ Install safety gates at the top and bottom of all staircases if a toddler is present.
- ✓ Install guards on windows that are on the ground floor and up.
- ✓ Adjust automatic garage door openers so that they reverse easily when they hit an object.
- ✓ Buy bicycle helmets for anyone in your family who bikes. Remind children to wear them.

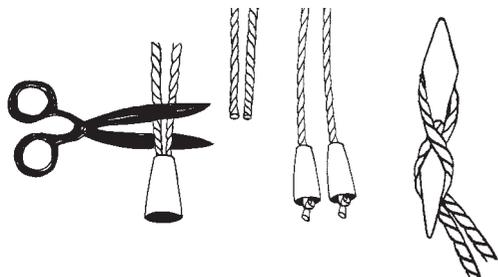
## Slips, trips, and falls

Falls are the major cause of household injuries. Most falls occur when someone slips on an icy, wet, or slick surface; trips over a loose rug, toy, or other object; or stumbles on stairs. Falls can also occur from a roof, ladder, or furniture.



## Suffocation, strangling, and choking

Each year hundreds of people die after choking on food, coins, or other small items. Most of these deaths involve infants, toddlers, and the elderly.



## Water safety

Drowning is the sixth leading cause of accidental death. From 1999 to 2003, 338 Wisconsin residents died as the result of drowning. Many of these deaths could have been prevented.

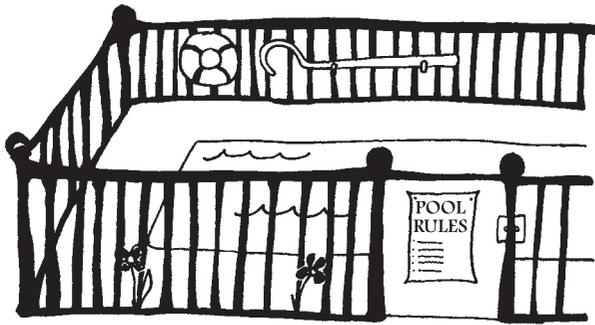
### *Healthy home tips to prevent choking and suffocation*

- ✓ Learn how to use the Heimlich maneuver to help someone who is choking.
- ✓ Keep small objects away from toddlers. Any object that is small enough to pass through a toilet paper tube poses a choking hazard.
- ✓ Place infants on their backs to sleep and avoid soft bedding. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants sleep on their backs on a firm crib mattress.
- ✓ Use cord wind-ups or tie-downs for drapery and blind cords or cut the ends of cord loops. Call 1-800-506-4636 for free repair kits for all blinds in your home.
- ✓ Remove drawstrings from children's clothing.
- ✓ Don't serve foods that are difficult to chew. Toddlers and some older individuals have difficulty chewing and swallowing certain foods. Raw fruits and vegetables, hot dogs, and other hard foods should be cut into bite-sized pieces before they are served.
- ✓ Remove doors before discarding old appliances.
- ✓ Keep plastic bags away from young children. Even thin plastic bags pose a suffocation hazard to children.
- ✓ Keep uninflated and broken balloon pieces away from children preschool-age and younger.

---

### *Healthy home tips on water safety*

- ✓ Learn CPR. This easy-to-learn method can save the life of a person who has stopped breathing.
- ✓ Don't mix water and electricity. Never place electrical appliances like radios, hairdryers, or fans near a sink, bathtub, or pool.



### *Protect young children from water hazards*

- ✓ Never leave a young child unattended near or in pools or tubs. Children love to play in water and can drown in a matter of seconds. Keep the toilet lid down when not in use and close the bathroom door. Empty bathtubs and buckets immediately after use. Store pails upside down outdoors to prevent accumulation of rainwater or snowmelt.
- ✓ Teach children to swim and talk to them about water safety.
- ✓ Enclose pools and hot tubs on all sides with a 5-foot fence and childproof, self-latching gate. Be sure the exterior of your home is not used as the fourth side of the fence.

---

### *Healthy home tips for gun owners*

- ✓ Store firearms and ammunition separately in locked cabinets.
- ✓ Keep the keys for gun cabinets hidden or with you at all times.
- ✓ Take a gun safety course.
- ✓ Require all members of your household to learn gun safety rules.
- ✓ Remove ammunition from guns before storing them.
- ✓ Secure unloaded firearms with gunlocks.

## Firearm safety

Every two hours someone's child is killed with a loaded gun. Handguns are intriguing to children, but they can kill instantly. Children and teenagers do not fully understand the dangers posed by firearms.

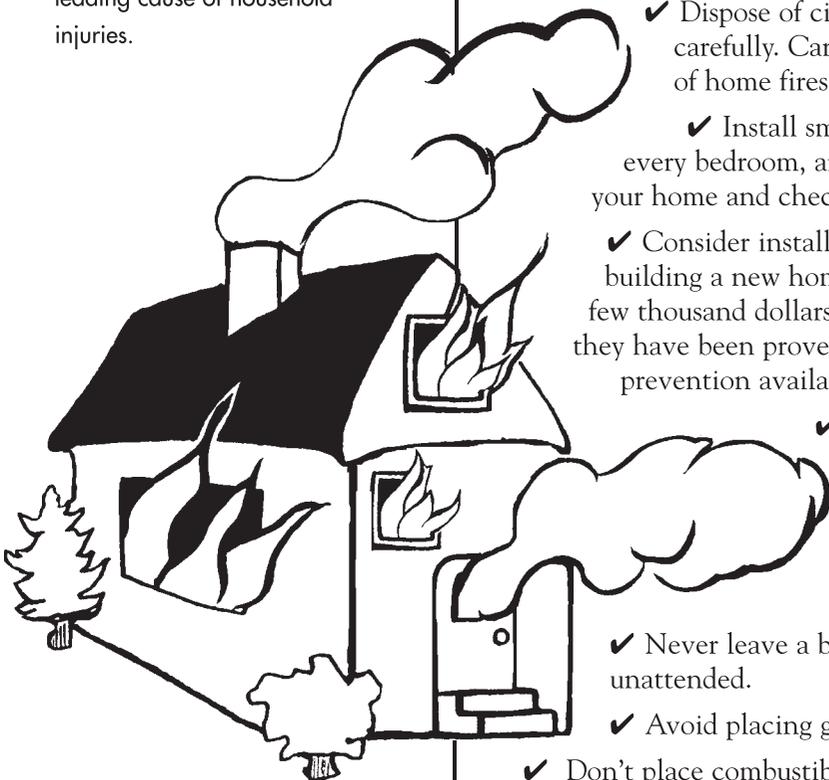
Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Wisconsin's teens and young adults. Many suicides are committed with handguns.

Gun owners have a responsibility to be sure their guns and ammunition are stored safely.



# Fire & Electrical Safety

Fires and burns are the second leading cause of household injuries.



## *Healthy home tips on fire safety*

- ✓ Dispose of cigarettes, cigars, and matches carefully. Careless smoking is a major cause of home fires.
- ✓ Install smoke detectors on each floor, in every bedroom, and in the basement and attic of your home and check the batteries monthly.
- ✓ Consider installing a sprinkler system when building a new home. These systems will add a few thousand dollars to your construction costs, but they have been proven to be the most effective fire prevention available.
- ✓ Plan at least two escape routes from each floor of your home and practice using them. Be sure you can open doors and windows from the inside without a key.
- ✓ Never leave a burning candle or fireplace unattended.
- ✓ Avoid placing grills on decks/under awnings.
- ✓ Don't place combustible materials such as laundry items or wood scraps near a furnace, water heater, or space heater.
- ✓ Don't use flammable chemicals in an enclosed space, especially near an appliance that has a pilot light.
- ✓ Have your furnace, gas and fuel appliances, and chimney inspected annually. Some utility companies provide free or low cost inspections. Otherwise contact a heating professional to schedule an inspection.
- ✓ Clean lint traps in clothes dryers after each use.
- ✓ Don't touch someone who has been electrocuted. First make sure electricity has been turned off. Otherwise, you could be a casualty yourself.

- ✓ Know how to prevent and extinguish kitchen fires. If a fire occurs, don't panic. For oven fires, close the door and turn off the oven. Use a pot lid to smother a stovetop fire. Keep an ABC-rated fire extinguisher near the kitchen and check it annually to see whether it needs to be replaced or refilled.
- ✓ Keep combustibles away from stovetops.
- ✓ Avoid distractions when you are cooking. Have someone else answer the telephone or door. If you must leave the kitchen, turn off all burners until you return.
- ✓ Prevent scalds by setting the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees or lower. Install anti-scald devices in each bathtub or shower.
- ✓ Know emergency telephone numbers for your area. In most regions, 911 will reach an emergency operator. Post this number near each telephone in your home. Teach children the emergency number.

---

*Protect children from fires and burns.*

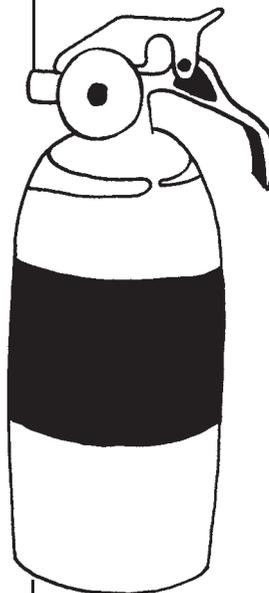
- ✓ Teach children about the dangers of playing with matches or lighters. Store these items out of the sight and reach of small children.
- ✓ Teach your children what to do if they smell smoke or if the smoke detector alarm sounds.
- ✓ Have children practice escaping from a "pretend fire."
- ✓ Never leave young children alone. Many fatal fires have been started by children who were left unsupervised.
- ✓ Use the rear burner of the stove and always turn the handles inward so they are not accessible to toddlers.
- ✓ Keep the cords for crockpots, coffee makers, and deep fryers above the counter and out of the reach of small children.

## Fire and burn prevention

Each year nearly 4,000 U.S. residents die in home fires. Thousands of others are injured as a result of fires or accidental burns. Most of these deaths involve children and elderly adults.

Most fatal fires occur in private homes. Kitchen accidents, space heaters, chimney fires, faulty electrical systems, and carelessly discarded cigarettes are common causes.

Check your home for fire hazards and install smoke detectors on every floor.



## Electrical safety

We use electricity every day to power our refrigerators, radios, televisions, and hairdryers.

While enjoying the convenience of these appliances, we tend to forget that they can also cause shocks and fires if mishandled.

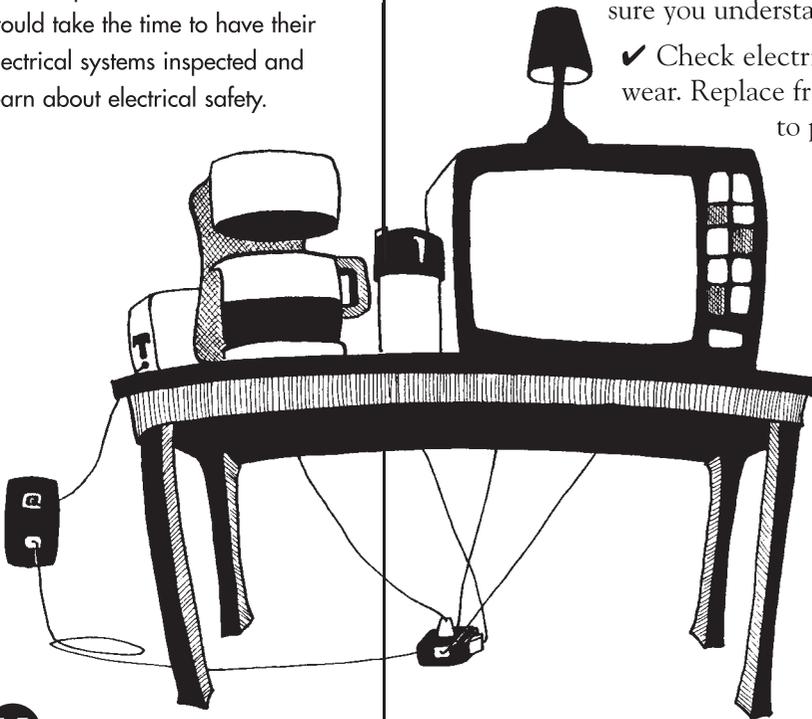
From 1999 to 2002, electrical plugs, cords, switches, and outlets were involved in 32,000 home fires, resulting in nearly 240 deaths on average per year.

Most electrical fires and injuries could be prevented if homeowners would take the time to have their electrical systems inspected and learn about electrical safety.

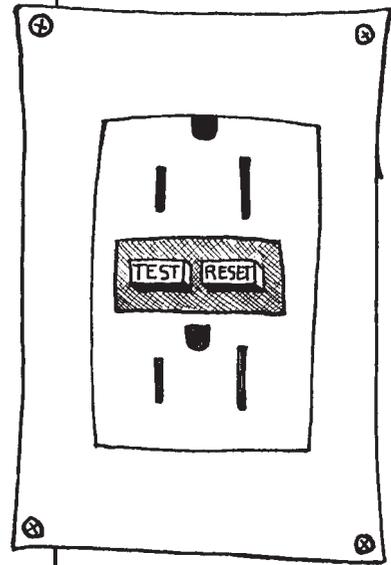
### *Healthy home tips on electrical safety*

- ✓ Have the wiring in your home inspected. Owners and buyers of homes that are more than 10 years old should consider an inspection. If your home is more than 40 years old, an inspection is overdue. Hire a licensed electrician to correct any problems found by the inspector.
- ✓ Install ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets in the kitchen, bathroom, and laundry area of your home. Test these outlets monthly to make sure they are working properly.
- ✓ Never place electrical cords under rugs or bedding. Heat or sparks from these cords could cause a fire.
- ✓ Follow the safety instructions that are provided with new electrical appliances. Pay attention to safety markings on electrical equipment and be sure you understand them.

- ✓ Check electrical cords for signs of wear. Replace frayed or cracked cords to prevent shocks and fires.



- ✓ Use the right sized light bulb and fuse. Check labels on light fixtures and lamps to see what size bulb to use. Check the label on your fuse box to be sure that fuses are the correct size for the circuit.
- ✓ Pay attention to electrical problems and take corrective action. Frequently blown fuses, tripped circuit breakers, shocks and hot electrical switches are warnings that something is wrong with your electrical system or with an appliance in your home.
- ✓ Hire a licensed professional to make repairs or modifications to your home's electrical system.
- ✓ Install cover plates on all electrical outlets and switches. Cover unused outlets with plastic plugs.
- ✓ Use 3-pronged plugs properly. The third prong is there because the appliance must be grounded to prevent electrical shocks.
- ✓ Take cover during an electrical storm. The safest place to be is in a building or car. If you are indoors, stay away from open windows and doors and use the telephone only in an emergency. If you are outdoors during a storm, stay away from water, trees, and metal objects like golf clubs, jewelry, and keys. Avoid low areas that might flood in a heavy rain.
- ✓ Be aware not to overload outlets. Extension cords shouldn't be used as permanent fixtures in home rebuilding.



## Ground fault circuit interrupter

A ground fault circuit interrupter or GFCI is a special type of electrical outlet that is designed to prevent electrical shocks. These outlets are recommended for areas where water is used.

Install GFCIs in bathrooms, kitchens (within 6 feet of the sink), laundry areas, garages, and basements. GFCIs are also recommended for outdoor outlets, and around pools, saunas, and hot tubs.

# Poison Prevention

Each year in the U.S. thousands of people suffer from accidental poisoning. They often require emergency medical care.

Household poisonings involve carbon monoxide fumes, cleaning products, cosmetics and personal care products, pesticides, medications and plants.

Poisonings are usually associated with young children, but also can involve adults and senior citizens.



## *Healthy home tips on poison prevention*

- ✓ Protect your family against carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector near the bedroom area of your home and have your heating system inspected every fall.
- ✓ Store chemicals and medications in their original containers. Original containers for these products contain information that may be needed in a poisoning. In addition, medicines and chemicals that have been transferred to an unlabeled container may be difficult to identify. Use of food containers like drinking glasses, cups or soda cans to store pesticide solutions, cleaning compounds, or solvents can result in an accidental poisoning.
- ✓ Read and follow product labels. Learn to use label information to select products that are safe for your home and the environment. If you have questions about the use and disposal of a product, call the manufacturer.
- ✓ When buying chemicals, buy only as much as you need for the job you plan to do. Although buying a larger quantity may save you a few dollars, storing left over toxic chemicals in your home is not a good idea.
- ✓ Never mix household chemicals that contain chlorine bleach with products that contain acids or ammonia. These chemicals can combine to form deadly chlorine gas.
- ✓ Use the Wisconsin Poison Center as a resource. Post their number near each telephone in your home. Call the Poison Center if you have questions about a toxic substance or possible poisoning (1-800-222-1222), anywhere in Wisconsin.

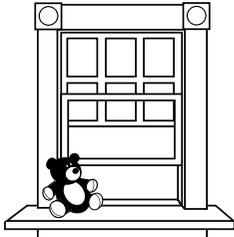
### *Prevent childhood poisonings*

- ✓ Store toxic chemicals in locked cabinets or above counter level. All cleaning products, toiletries, pesticides, and paint products should be stored out of the sight and reach of small children.
- ✓ Store vitamins, iron pills, and other medications in locked cabinets. Hide the key in a separate location.
- ✓ Buy products that are packaged in child-resistant containers (this delays access; it doesn't prevent it).
- ✓ Keep poisonous plants out of small children's reach. Learn about the plants in your home and yard. Some very common ones, such as philodendrons, dieffenbachias and lilly of the valley, are poisonous. Consider loaning toxic houseplants to a friend or taking them to work until your toddler is older.

## Handling and storing toxic chemicals

Cleaning products, lawncare chemicals, insecticides, paint removers or thinners, and medications are found in most homes. When used for their intended purpose, these products can make our lives easier and more enjoyable. However when they are used inappropriately or ingested by a curious child, these chemicals can cause serious health problems or death.





**look out  
FOR LEAD**

## Living with lead-based paint

If your home was built before 1978 it may contain lead-based paint or varnish.

Dust or chips from lead-based paint can easily poison preschool-aged children. Children under 36 months of age are at highest risk. If they play near windows or other places with worn out or damaged paint, they can get dust on their fingers and toys.

Childhood exposure to lead causes problems with learning, growth and behavior that can last an entire lifetime.

Adult exposure to lead can affect pregnancy success and blood pressure regulation.

### *Healthy home tips on lead*

- ✓ Have preschool-age children tested for lead. Most children with lead poisoning don't look sick. The only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is to have a blood test. Your local health department, clinic or doctor can give your child a blood test for lead. All preschool-age children who live in or regularly visit older homes (e.g. daycare, babysitter's or relative's home) should be tested. If your child's blood lead level is high more tests will be done to be sure the lead level is coming down.
- ✓ Clean up chips and dust from leaded paint. If you can, use a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuum for this purpose. Ask your local health department where you can find a HEPA vacuum to borrow.
- ✓ Control lead dust by damp dusting hard surfaces, wet mopping floors and vacuuming carpets frequently. Wash dust rags separate from other laundry items or throw them away.
- ✓ Focus on window wells and woodwork. Use paper towels, warm water and soap (any household cleaner will work) to wash dust and loose paint chips from window wells and woodwork. Rinse well.
- ✓ Don't allow children to play or sleep in areas that are contaminated with chips or dust from lead paint.
- ✓ Wash children's hands often. This is especially important before meals and snacks, and after playing outdoors, and before nap or bedtime.
- ✓ Choose foods that are high in calcium and iron. These minerals help to prevent lead absorption.

- ✓ Never disturb old paint when children are present. Keep children away from the home while you work on deteriorated painted surfaces.
- ✓ Never dry scrape, dry sand or use a heat gun or torch to remove old paint. These methods can increase your family's exposure to lead. Instead, use a spray bottle with water and wet down the surfaces where you're going to remove loose paint. Make sure to clean up the paint chips and dust immediately.
- ✓ Call your local health department or the Wisconsin Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (608) 266-5817 for more information.

## Mercury in your home

Many common household items such as thermometers, thermostats, electrical switches, fluorescent light bulbs, and smoke detectors can contain traces of mercury. When these items are broken, burned, or tampered with the mercury can be released into the air of your home. Breathing air that contains mercury can cause nerve and kidney damage.

---

### *Healthy home tips on mercury*

- ✓ Avoid buying items that contain mercury. Look for safer substitutes such as alcohol-filled or digital thermometers.
- ✓ If a thermometer breaks in your home, clean the mercury up carefully, double wrap it in plastic and discard it in your household trash. Do not vacuum up mercury droplets. This can cause dangerous levels of mercury vapors to be released into the air.
- ✓ Contact your local health department immediately for assistance with spills of more than a teaspoon of mercury. These spills require special cleanup procedures.

## Hazardous household waste

Take advantage of annual "clean sweeps" that may be sponsored by your local community to get rid of toxic household wastes like leftover paints, solvents, and pesticides. Take used motor oil and batteries to community drop off sites for recycling. The city or county waste manager can tell you where your nearest drop off site is located.

# Crime Prevention

Every 15 minutes a burglary occurs somewhere in Wisconsin.



## *Healthy home tips on home security*

- ✓ Install motion detector lights. Lighting is one of the most effective ways to discourage a burglar. By surrounding the exterior of your home with motion detector lights, you can make it almost impossible for a burglar to enter without being noticed.
- ✓ Make your home visible. The effectiveness of lighting will be improved if privacy hedges, shrubbery, and fences are cleared to make your home more visible to neighbors and passersby.
- ✓ Install an automatic garage door opener. A garage door opener with a remote control allows you to enter and leave your home safely. The remote opener should activate a light that will illuminate the garage so that an intruder hiding there can be seen from the safety of your locked car. Be sure the door reverses easily when it hits an object.
- ✓ Install dead-bolt locks on all exterior doors. These locks should be installed in reinforced doorframes so that the doors cannot be easily kicked in. All locks should be able to be unlocked from the inside without a key to allow a quick escape from a home fire.
- ✓ Install wide-angle viewfinders or "peepholes" in all exterior doors. These will let you see who is outside your door before you open it.
- ✓ Contact your local police or sheriff's department to find out where to obtain an engraver to mark valuable items such as stereos, computers, cameras, lawnmowers and tools. In Wisconsin the recommended identification number is your driver's license number preceded by the letters "WI." After engraving your items, you will be given Operation Identification stickers to put in windows near your front and back door. These stickers tell would-be

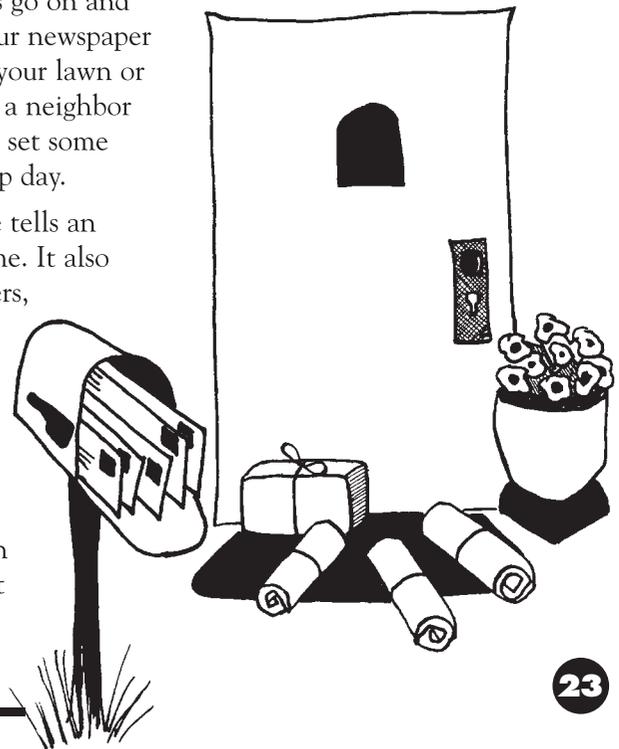
burglars that valuables in your home will be hard to sell.

- ✓ Don't keep expensive jewelry, collectibles, or large amounts of cash in your home.
- ✓ Keep an inventory of your valuables with serial numbers. A videotape, photograph, or sales receipt will help support an insurance claim in case of loss.
- ✓ Install locks on windows. All sliding doors and windows should have "ventilation" locks as well as auxiliary locks. Screens and storm windows should be secured from the inside. Be sure to include good locks for garage and basement windows.
- ✓ Keep shrubbery trimmed near entrances so that it doesn't provide cover for an intruder.
- ✓ Don't advertise your absence. Never leave a message on your answering machine that tells thieves you are away for a few days or on vacation. Before you leave, set timers so that lights, TVs, and radios go on and off throughout the house. Don't stop your newspaper or mail delivery. Hire someone to mow your lawn or remove snow while you're away and ask a neighbor to pick up your newspaper and mail and set some garbage out on your curb on trash pickup day.
- ✓ Close your garage door. A vacant garage tells an intruder that you're probably not at home. It also provides easy access to bikes, lawnmowers, snow removal equipment and other valuables. A burglar who closes the garage door creates a hiding place where he can work at his leisure to break into your home.
- ✓ Lock your car and keep valuables out of sight. Don't keep the title for your car in the glove compartment. You will need it to prove ownership if the car is stolen.

## Home security

More than 30,000 burglaries occur every year in Wisconsin. With each home break-in, hundreds of dollars worth of valuables are lost to criminals and the lives of the residents are disrupted. Many burglary victims will never feel safe in their home again. The most serious home break-ins involve violence and even murder.

Most thieves are looking for an "easy mark." With a few simple strategies, you can discourage them from targeting your home.



## Personal protection

Whether at home or away, we are all potential crime victims. The most common crimes involve burglary and theft. But reports of car jackings, child abductions, and physical assaults create great anxiety and fear among many Americans.

You can reduce your family's risk of being victimized by a criminal. Remember that your best defenses are awareness and prevention.



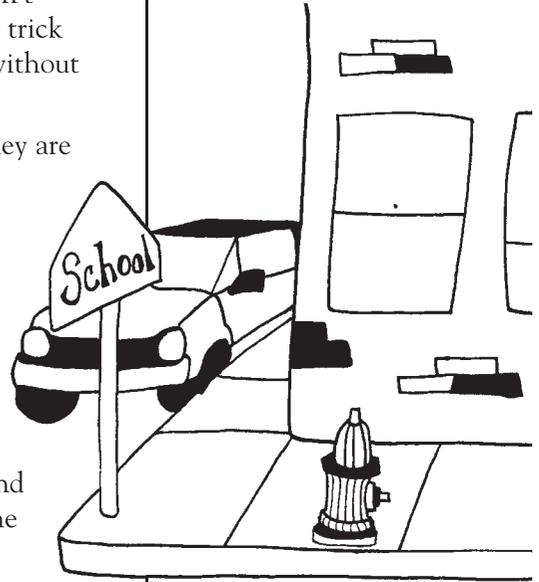
### *Healthy home tips on personal safety*

- ✓ Keep the doors of your home locked whether you are at home or away.
- ✓ Never open your door to a stranger. Use your “peephole” to see who is at the door before you open it. Ask for identification before allowing a meter reader or repairman into your home.
- ✓ Keep your car doors locked while you are driving and while the car is parked.
- ✓ Don't give your name, address, charge card number or social security number to an unknown caller. When programming messages on your answering machine never give your name or address. Program it to say something like: “I'm sorry we are unable to take your call now. Please leave a message at the tone.”
- ✓ Never surprise a burglar. If, upon returning to your home, you spot evidence of a break-in, do not enter the area. Go to a safe place and call the police immediately. The burglar may still be around and could be dangerous.
- ✓ Don't display large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry when you are in public. This is especially important when you are in unfamiliar surroundings.
- ✓ Avoid areas that are known to have high crime rates, especially at night.

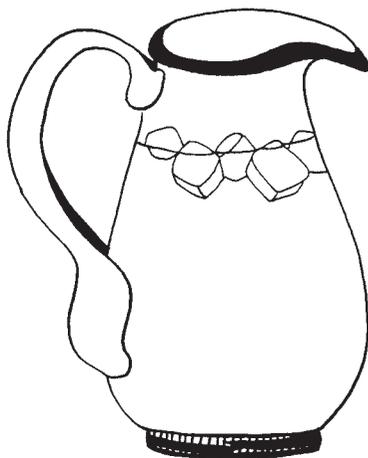
*Protect your children from crime.*

- ✓ Never leave small children alone in a public area such as a store, park, or public bathroom. Have young children walk to school with an older sibling or friend, or take them to school yourself. Don't allow children to roam the neighborhood, go trick or treating alone, or sell items door-to-door without adult supervision.
- ✓ Instruct children not to answer the door if they are alone.
- ✓ Teach children about telephone safety. Children who are at home alone should tell callers that their parents are unable to come to the telephone. Warn them not to give their name or address to an unknown caller.
- ✓ Talk to children about crime and safety. Warn them not to talk to strangers and remind them not to enter the car or home of someone they don't know.
- ✓ Teach children how to use emergency telephone numbers. In most areas 911 will reach an emergency operator. Leave the telephone number of a parent, neighbor, or nearby relative so that children or a babysitter can reach someone if they have questions or feel anxious.
- ✓ Teach children their home telephone number and address. Show them how to call home from a pay telephone.

Never leave small children alone in a public area such as a store, park, or public bathroom.



# Drinking Water



## Know your water supply

Take a moment to think about how water is used in your home. Whether it's for drinking, cooking, bathing, or doing laundry, an abundant supply of clean water is an important part of a healthy home.

Knowing where your water comes from and what the most common water supply problems are in your area can help you make sure that the water coming out of your tap is safe, no matter how you use it.

## Water quality testing

If you own a private well, it is your responsibility to be sure your water supply is safe. Routine testing and well maintenance will help you protect your water supply.

---

### *Healthy home tips for private well owners*

- ✓ Take the time to learn about your water supply. The depth of your well, the length of its casing, the type of soil or bedrock in your area, and regional land-use information are important predictors of the quality of your water supply.
- ✓ Find out when your well was last tested, what tests were run, and the results of the tests. Keep records of any tests or repairs that you make. This information will help you or a future owner decide when it's time to do more testing.
- ✓ Test at least once a year for bacteria. Several public and private laboratories in Wisconsin can conduct these tests. Check the yellow pages in your phone book to find a lab near you.
- ✓ Test for nitrate. This is especially important if there is a pregnant woman or infant in your home. Nitrate can enter groundwater from fertilizer use, barnyard runoff, and septic system leachate. A high nitrate level may indicate the presence of other contaminants such as bacteria or farm chemicals.
- ✓ Consider testing for other contaminants. Talk to a water supply expert at your regional Department of Natural Resources (DNR) office to find out whether natural contaminants such as arsenic or radon are common in your area. If your well is located near an old landfill or gasoline station, or if there has ever been a buried fuel tank on your property, you should consider testing your water for

volatile organic chemicals (VOCs). If your well is located near an orchard or farm field, you may want to have it tested for pesticide residues.

- ✓ Correct/eliminate all cross-connections.
- ✓ Have your water tested if you notice a change in its taste, odor, or appearance. Some tests are expensive and may require assistance from a water supply expert. Contact your well driller, regional DNR office, or your local health agency for assistance.
- ✓ Take action if harmful bacteria or chemicals are detected in your water. Find the source of the problem, make the necessary repairs to your well, and test your water again to be sure the problem was corrected. If bacteria or chemicals continue to be present, contact a water supply expert. He or she can offer advice on how you can obtain a safe drinking water supply. Possible solutions include increasing the depth of your well, adding more casing, installing a new well in a different location, or abandoning your well and connecting to a community supply.
- ✓ Keep toxic chemicals, septic effluent, and animal waste away from your well. Dispose of pesticides, motor oil, paints, and solvents properly. Don't put these chemicals into your septic system. Limit your use of lawn and garden pesticides and fertilizers which often find their way into ground water. Keep the area around your well cap clear.
- ✓ Install backflow devices on outdoor faucets. These devices will prevent water from a garden hose from flowing backwards into your drinking water system.
- ✓ Hire a licensed plumber for major repairs or modifications to your home's plumbing system.
- ✓ Conserve water. Clean water is a precious commodity. Don't waste it. Use water-efficient faucets, toilets, and showerheads, and repair plumbing leaks promptly.

## Common water supply problems

**Bacteria & Viruses.** The most common pollutants found in private wells are coliform bacteria. Detection of these organisms suggests that human or animal wastes have entered your water supply. While most bacteria won't make you sick, they indicate the possible presence of disease-causing bacteria, viruses, or parasites.

**Chemicals.** A variety of harmful chemicals such as gasoline, solvents, and pesticides can enter groundwater as a result of their use and disposal. Naturally occurring substances such as arsenic, manganese, iron, and radon can also affect the quality of your drinking water.

Public water supplies are tested for more than 100 different contaminants. If you use water from a public utility you can contact their office to get information about the quality of your drinking water.

Groundwater is contained in soil and underground rock formations. All private wells and many public water supplies use groundwater as a water source.

Several communities use surface water that is drawn from nearby lakes. Lake Winnebago, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior are all used for this purpose.

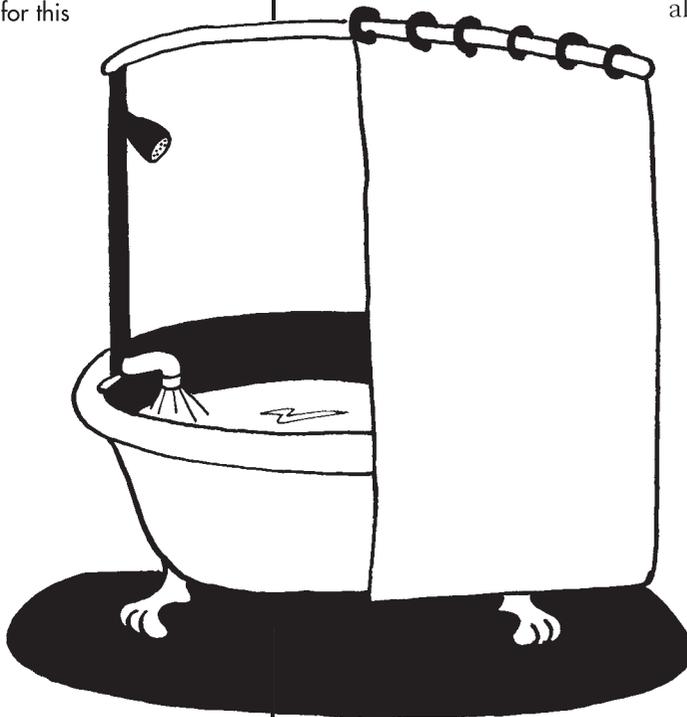
### *Healthy home tips for public water consumers*

- ✓ Find out where your water comes from and who provides it. Contact your water utility if you have questions about your water supply.
- ✓ Protect your community's water supply. Follow any water-use advisories that are issued by your water supplier. Dispose of pesticides, motor oil, and other toxic chemicals properly. Consider reducing your use of lawn and garden pesticides and fertilizers since these chemicals often find their way into drinking water supplies.
- ✓ Be aware of changes in your water supply. A change in the taste, odor, or appearance of your water may indicate a serious water quality problem. Call your water utility if you notice any of these changes.

✓ Install backflow devices on all outdoor faucets. These devices will prevent water from a garden hose from flowing backwards into your drinking water system.

✓ Hire a licensed plumber whenever you modify or expand your plumbing system.

✓ Conserve water. Clean water is a precious commodity. Don't waste it. Use water-efficient faucets, toilets, and showerheads, and correct plumbing leaks promptly.



# Important Telephone Numbers

## Wisconsin Division of Public Health contacts:

### **Asbestos**

608-261-6876

### **Asthma**

608-267-6845

### **Drinking Water**

608-266-7480

### **Food Handling & Food Safety**

608-266-2835

### **Indoor Air**

608-266-2817

### **Injury Prevention**

608-267-7174

### **Lead Poisoning**

608-266-5817

### **Radon**

608-267-4795

### **Toxic Chemicals**

608-266-0923

### **Environmental Health Website:**

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/eh>

## Other contacts:

### **Poison Center Hotline**

1-800-222-1222

### **Fire Prevention**

911 or Local Fire Dept.

### **Electrical Safety**

Local Utility or Electrical  
Contractor

### **Carbon Monoxide**

Heating Contractor/Gas  
Utility/Local Fire Department

### **Crime and Personal Safety**

911 or Local Police Dept.

### **Public Health Professional**

City or County Health  
Department

### **Radon Hotline**

888-LOW RADON

### **Firearm Safety**

911 or Local Police Dept.



### **Home Safety**

(US Consumer Products Safety  
Commission Hotline)  
1-800-638-2772

### **Indoor Air**

(EPA IAQ Info Hotline)  
1-800-438-4318

### **Lead Poisoning**

(National Lead Info Center)  
1-800-424-5323

### **Drinking Water**

(EPA Safe Drinking Water  
Hotline)  
1-800-426-4791

### **Radon**

(National Safety Council)  
1-800-557-2366

### **HUD's FHA Hotline Healthy Homes**

1-800-HUDS-FHA

*Developed by the*  
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services,  
Division of Public Health  
PPH 4970 (Rev. 4/05)

*Funding provided by*  
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services