

Common airborne contaminants in the home



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1. Insulation: The jagged edged particles of fiberglass are of even greater concern than asbestos, which can still be found in older houses. Urethane is a further concern.
2. Pressed wood in furniture and flooring: manufactured with formaldehyde, which is released as gas.
3. Dry cleaning: source of toxic toluenes and PERC.
4. Dust mites: the excreta and body parts of these organisms are a common allergen, a particular problem in bedrooms.
5. Lead: found in older paints and plumbing pipes.
6. Aerosols in personal care products: a common source of organic gases, some of which are suspected carcinogens.
7. Gas stove: can be a source of combustion by-products.
8. Household cleaning products: can contain many harmful volatile chemicals.
9. Pesticides: source of extremely toxic chemicals that can be released into indoor air.
10. Smoke from fireplace or wood stove: open fireplaces can produce ash dust, carcinogenic tars and combustion by-products like carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides.
11. Wall coverings: plasticized wallpapers can emit VOC's; wood panelling is often manufactured with formaldehyde.
12. Draperies: treated fabrics can contain formaldehyde. Curtain folds collect dust.
13. Tobacco smoke: tobacco smoke contains 43 carcinogens, the danger to nonsmokers from second-hand smoke, especially children, is now becoming recognized.
14. Carpets: source of formaldehyde. Harbor dust, dust mites and animal dander.
15. Paints and solvents: these are sources of many volatile chemicals, which are easily vaporized.
16. Fuels: storage of gasoline, kerosene, and other fuels can release volatile chemicals into household air.
17. Pet dander: animal hair and skin flakes are a common source of allergens.
18. Auto exhaust: such fumes can enter the home from the garage or nearby traffic flow. Carbon monoxide is the primary danger, and has a cumulative effect in the human system.
19. Asbestos fibers reside in lung tissue and can cause lung cancer or emphysema. Radon: radon gas is a natural emission where uranium exists underground.
20. Radon carries radioactive particles that can be a dangerous cause of lung cancer.