



# Interior Pollution Sources

Tips to reduce exposure to interior pollution sources

Interior pollution sources is a larger category encompassing items or materials often found inside the home that lead to significant health issues when inhaled. Most of these hazards can be classified as a building material, combustion product, or chemical.

The main pollutants produced by building materials are formaldehyde, asbestos, and lead. Formaldehyde is a chemical found in many pressed wood products as well as some insulations and glues. Asbestos is a fibrous mineral found in older buildings as fire-proofing or acoustic insulation material. Lead is an elemental pollutant found in some paints as well as contaminated soil, dust, and water. Inhalation of these pollutants can lead to ear, nose, and throat irritation; cancer, and damage to the central nervous system, kidneys, and blood.

Combustion products in the home include: kerosene heaters, furnaces, stoves, and fireplaces. The main pollutants produced as combustion byproducts are carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, respirable particles, and formaldehyde (see above). Carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides are colorless, odorless, tasteless gas byproducts and respirable particles are small particulate byproducts produced during the combustion process. Inhalation of these pollutants can lead to respiratory tract irritation and infection, aggravation of asthma and respiratory diseases, cancer, and even death by asphyxiation.

Numerous types of chemicals each with different purposes can be found around the house. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) are the main pollutant produced by chemicals and can be found in cleaners, paints, paint strippers, disinfectants, wood preservatives, and automotive products. Pesticides are a type of chemical used to kill household pests and can also be used on lawns and gardens and are classified as semi-volatile organic compounds. Inhalation of VOCs or pesticides causes eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches, nausea, and damage to the liver, kidneys, and central nervous system. For more specific information regarding any pollutants mentioned here, visit the virtual health house.

## Tips to reduce exposure to interior pollution:

- To reduce formaldehyde exposure, use exterior grade pressed wood products containing phenol resins.
- Leave undamaged asbestos products alone, and contact a professional if any needs to be removed.
- Keep children play areas dust free and clean as possible to reduce lead exposure.
- Do not remove lead paint yourself, if it needs to be removed hire a professional.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector/ alarm.
- To prevent exposure to combustion by-products, vent all furnaces outdoors or open windows and doors when using an un-vented heater.

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## Tips (cont.):

- Change filters on central heating and cooling systems according to manufactures instructions to reduce particulate pollution.
- Hire a professional for an annual maintenance routine for all combustion products that should include: tune-ups, check for heat exchanger leakage, evidence of start-up spillage, and condensation in chimneys.
- Keep all household chemical products out of reach of children and pets.
- Use household chemical products according to manufacturers instructions, avoid mixing products unless specified on labels, and have adequate ventilation when using them.
- Use non-chemical pesticide methods when possible



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