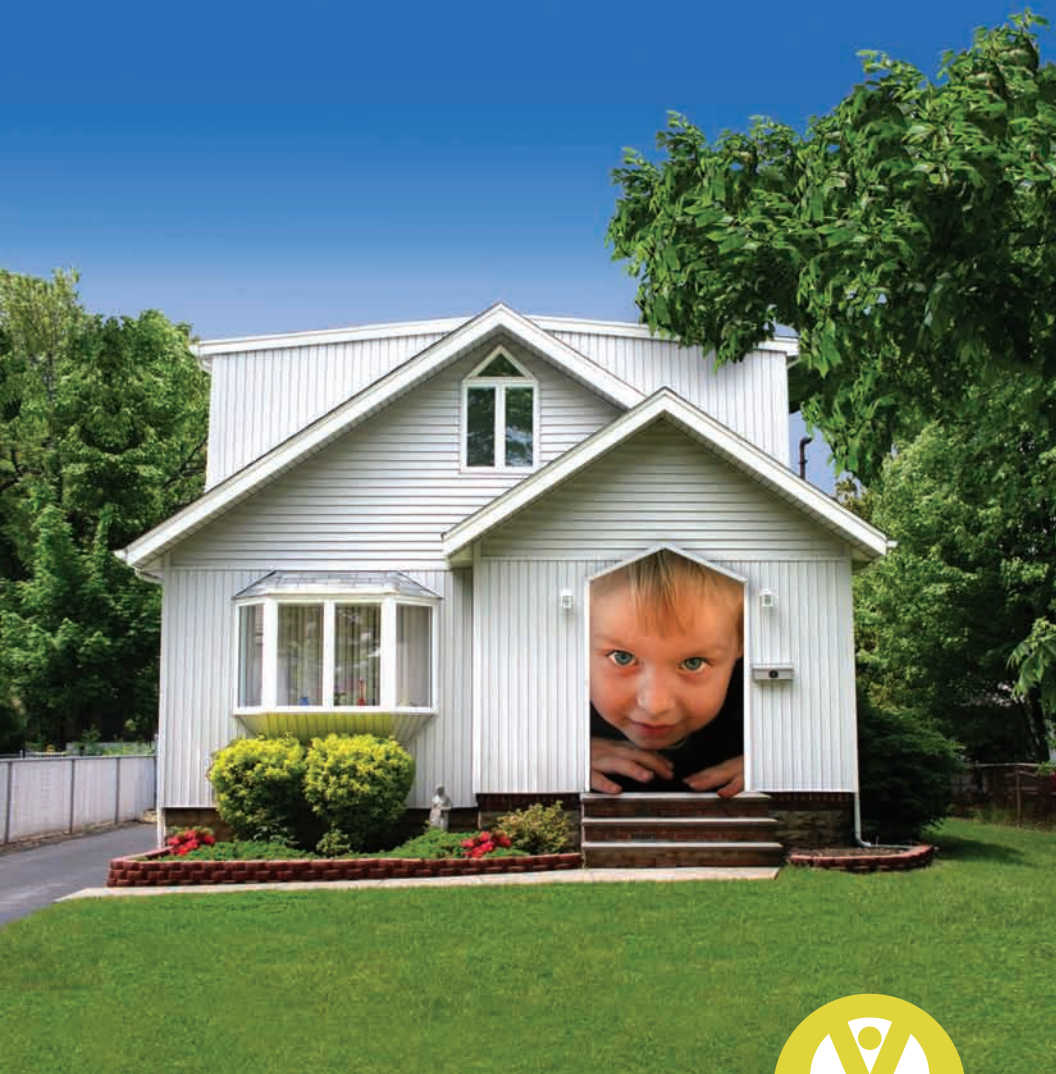


HOME ENVIRONMENT checklist



Thunder Bay District
Health Unit

HOME ENVIRONMENT checklist

There are many types of contaminants found in the indoor and outdoor environment that can affect our health. They can be found in the air, soil, dust, water, food and consumer products. Children and pregnant women are more at risk for the following reasons:





- Children eat, drink and breathe more than adults
- Small children do things differently than adults: they are closer to the ground and tend to put dirty hands and objects in their mouths
- Children go through many growth and development stages from birth to 18 years of age
- Risk is greatest in the womb as different organs and systems develop during the 9 months of pregnancy

We cannot control everything about our environment but simple lifestyle changes you do at home can create a healthier environment and decrease your family's risk of certain illnesses such as asthma and allergies.

This handy checklist can help identify what you are currently doing and what changes you can make to improve your home environment. Also, look for this logo to check out things you can do to help save energy and the planet.






		Ask smokers to smoke outside and not in the house
		Open windows when cleaning, vacuuming, making crafts and working with solvents
		Close windows and curtains on hot summer days 
		Turn down the thermostat by at least a couple of degrees in the winter when not at home 
		Remove unnecessary carpets and vacuum with a HEPA filter
		Use environmentally friendly cleaners such as vinegar and baking soda
		Stop using room deodorizers, air fresheners and scented candles
		Use low or no Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) paint instead of oil based paint
		Switch to compact fluorescent bulbs. Do not break or put them in the garbage 
		Get your home inspected for energy efficiency 





Artwork by Mariah Morrison

IN THE BATHROOM

		Use cloth versus disposable diapers more often
		Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth
		Reduce the use of scented personal care products such as hair spray, nail polish, shampoos and perfumes
		Make your own personal care products such as baby lotion and milk bath
		Use the fan (for at least 20 min.) or open a window when having a bath/shower to reduce mould build-up
		Dispose of household cleaners properly
		Take a shower as soon as you arrive home if you work with harmful chemicals such as pesticides
		Take showers more often than baths as they use less water 
		Buy a vinyl-free shower curtain, or air a vinyl curtain outside to release the chemical smell ("off gassing")
		Avoid vinyl bath toys especially for young children: kids should not chew on these toys

IN THE LIVING ROOM

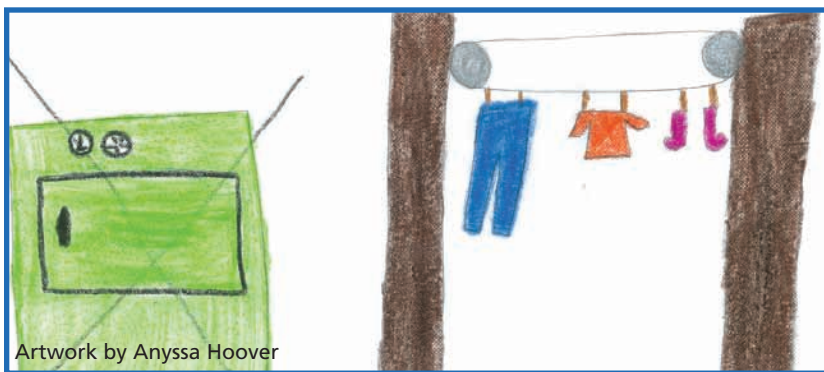
		Use reusable gift bags instead of wrapping paper 
		Dust regularly to prevent dust build-up especially around electronics such as computers and televisions
		Limit exposure to computers and other electronic equipment such as televisions and cellular phones
		Purchase furniture made from VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) free materials
		Find out about Health Canada's toy recall website and properly dispose of toys that are broken or recalled

		Breastfeed your baby
		Buy local foods more often
		Make your own baby food
		Reheat foods in the microwave instead of the oven: use glass instead of plastic containers/wrap
		Wash fruits and veggies well with water
		Be informed about guidelines on levels of mercury and contaminants in fish for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women (see back for website)
		Use reusable dishes and cutlery instead of disposable ones
		Choose #1, 2, 4 and 5 plastics versus #3, 6 & 7
		Throw out any plastic that is chipped or cracked
		Use glass and stainless steel products in the kitchen more often than plastic or Teflon™
		Cool food first before putting into plastic containers
		Buy organic meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables especially: apples, celery, cherries, grapes, lettuce, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, spinach, strawberries and sweet bell peppers
		Prepare more homemade food rather than buying ready-to-eat store bought food
		Run the dishwasher only when full 
		Limit the use of vinyl products such as vinyl tablecloths
		Pack a litterless lunch for work and school using containers






IN THE BEDROOM

		Keep pets out of the bedroom
		Purchase good-quality second-hand clothes
		Donate used clothes to a local charity
		Check your blinds to make sure they do not contain lead
		Be aware of imported jewellery/toys: if you can draw a gray line on paper with them, they may contain lead









Artwork by Anyssa Hoover

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM








		Use phosphate-free and unscented laundry detergent
		Hang clothes to dry instead of using the dryer 
		Buy clothes that don't require dry cleaning
		Remove dryer lint and dryer sheets after every load and dispose of them carefully in the garbage
		Wash work clothes separately, especially if you work with harmful chemicals
		Wash only full loads of laundry 
		Wash clothes in cold water whenever possible 

IN THE GARAGE








		Purchase a smaller vehicle instead of a larger vehicle	
		Dispose of motor oil properly	
		Take your bike, walk or car pool instead of driving whenever possible	
		Drive the speed limit	
		Do not idle your car unnecessarily	
		Ensure your tires are inflated properly to improve fuel performance	
		Bring your vehicle for tune-ups on a regular basis	
		When working with chemicals, paints, solvents, glues or hobby products, open the window	
		Store chemicals, paints, solvents, glues and hobby products in a shed or detached garage	
		Replace plastic shopping bags with reusable bags and keep some handy in the car	
		Don't smoke in your car, especially if children under 16 are inside (bill 69)	
		Don't use deodorizers or air fresheners in your vehicle	



Artwork by Brooke P.

		Do not use pesticides	
		Choose organic fertilizers	
		Use a covered container to capture rain water for the garden	
		Test well water regularly for bacteria and high levels of nitrates	
		Purchase local native plants for the yard	
		Plant more trees	
		Compost your vegetable waste as well as coffee grinds, egg shells and leaves	
		Convert an old sandbox to a garden or a flower bed	
		Plant an extra row in your garden and donate your produce to the local food programs	
		Buy only non-toxic play equipment: throw away chipped, scratched or worn out toys	
		Wear a shirt, a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen (over 6 months of age), and seek shade between 11 am–4 pm	
		Empty containers of standing water to decrease areas where mosquitoes breed	
		Remove outdoor shoes at the door to avoid tracking dirt indoors	
		Wash your hands after you come back into the house	
		Pick up pet droppings	
		Use gloves to work in your garden	
		Use a push mower instead of a gas or electric lawn mower	
		Direct eavestroughs and down spouts away from your home and ensure they are clear of debris	

IN THE COMMUNITY

		Walk or bike with family/friends in city parks and on trails	
		Visit local Farmers' Markets to purchase local food	
		Recycle as much as you can using curbside recycling or drop off at recycling depots	
		Be aware of waste disposal site dates eg: solvent and battery drop-off days	
		Find out which playgrounds and beaches are smoke-free and pesticide-free	
		Find out about environmental programs and organizations in your community	
		Take public transit whenever possible	
		Find out where to donate second-hand items	
		Follow municipal water restrictions	
		Take part in the rain barrel and composter programs	
		Have your home tested for lead plumbing if it was built before 1955	
		Contact your local pharmacy to dispose of old medicines	
		Bring household tubes or compact fluorescent bulbs to EcoSuperior	

Web Links

Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and the Environment
www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca

EcoSuperior Environmental Programs
www.ecosuperior.com

Ministry of the Environment
www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/guide/index.html

Thunder Bay District Health Unit
www.tbdhu.com and search “home environment”



For more information contact:

**Healthy Families Program
Thunder Bay District Health Unit
1-888-294-6630, ext. 5972
625-5972
www.tbdhu.com**