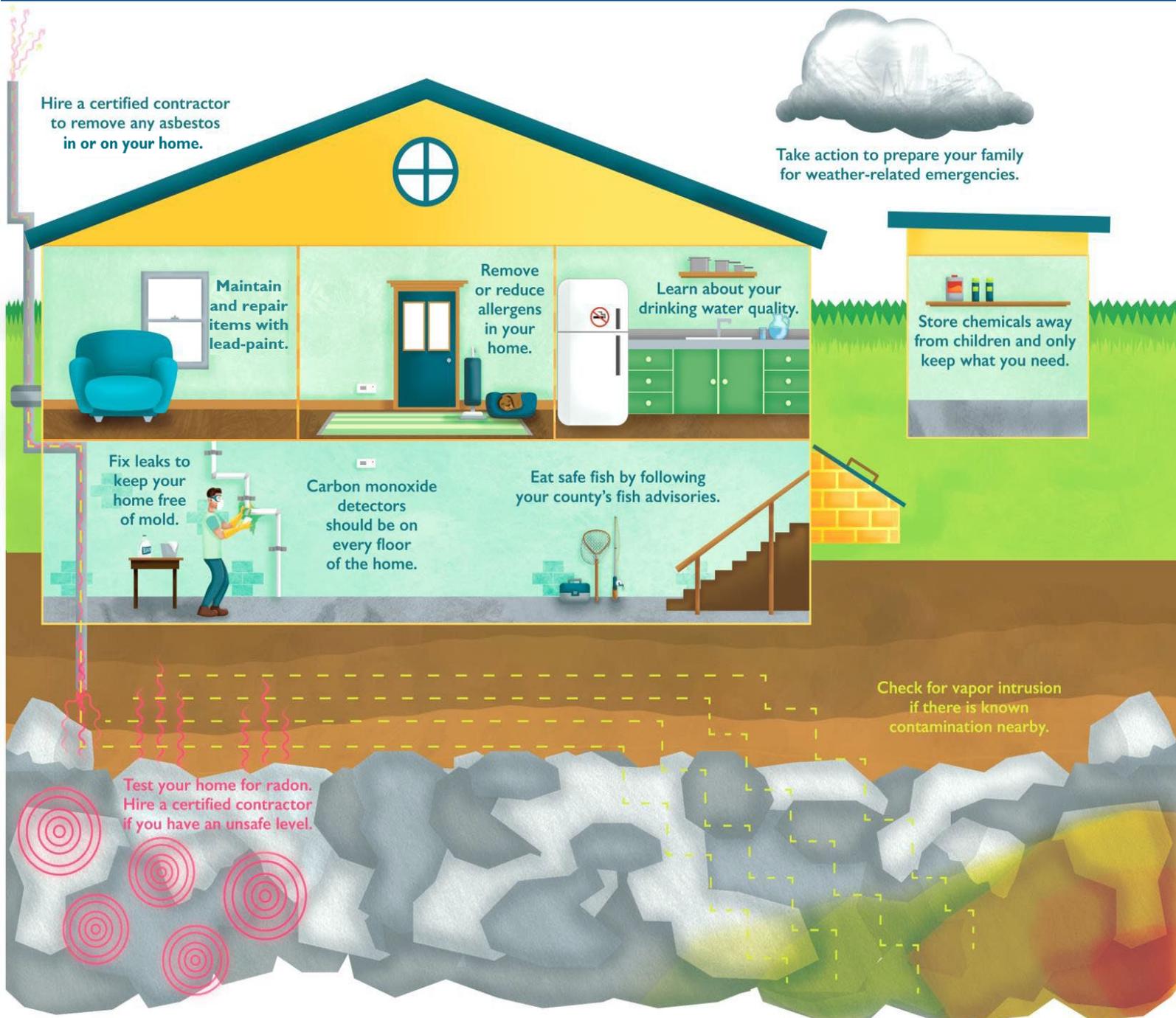


Healthy Homes Toolkit

Resources to Promote National Healthy Homes Month
April 2024



Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Division of Public Health | Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health
dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/healthyhomes.htm | DHSEnvHealth@wi.gov | P-03005

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Introduction

[National Healthy Homes Month \(NHHM\)](#) is observed in April this year by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recognizes the need for a coordinated effort to promote healthy homes in Wisconsin. Through the efforts of programs within the Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health (BEOH), the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program (TPCP) and Children’s Health Alliance of Wisconsin (CHAW), these resources are intended to create consistent messaging to promote healthy homes, especially during NHHM.



NHHM is an opportunity to bring partners together to increase the awareness of indoor environmental health hazards and encourage local organizations and Wisconsinites to take preventive action. This toolkit is designed to assist partners in promoting healthy homes during the month of April and beyond. Included are resources and sample messaging that can be customized to reach a variety of audiences at the state and local levels.

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Healthy Homes Topics

Asthma

There are many “triggers” in the home that can create breathing problems for people with asthma and allergies. Common indoor asthma triggers include: tobacco smoke, pet dander, mice droppings, dust mites found in dust, mold, chemicals in cleaning supplies, pests, and strong odors from scented candles or cosmetics. Removing these triggers from your home can drastically improve asthma and allergy symptoms and help your family members successfully control their asthma and allergies. Did you know that the [Wisconsin Asthma-Safe Homes Program](#) provides free, in-home asthma education and home repair services to eligible families?

Climate and Health

Wisconsin’s changing climate is already harming people’s health, a trend that is predicted to continue as our state experiences more hot and cold temperature extremes; increased frequency and intensity of precipitation alternating with drought and wildfires; worsening air quality; and longer mosquito, tick and pollen seasons. Each of these climate impacts add up to create significant health risks, including: injury, disease and illness, allergic reactions, water and food insecurity, stress and anxiety, and even death. [Learn more](#) about how to stay safe and healthy in a changing climate.

Lead

[Lead](#) damages the brain and other body systems. Preventing lead exposure is so critical because there is no safe level of lead in the human body. If your home was built before 1978, you should test the paint for lead. Always have a certified lead safe worker repair chipping or peeling paint. Protect your family from other exposures by testing your drinking water for lead contamination and being aware of other sources of lead. If you live in a [home built before 1978 that has chipping or peeling paint, the Wisconsin Lead Safe Homes Program may be able to help.](#)



Healthy Homes Topics

Mold

Mold spores travel easily through the air and begin to grow indoors when moisture is present. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores from the indoors, so the best way to control mold growth is to control indoor moisture. When indoor conditions are just right, mold spores can grow and become a problem. By taking important steps, you can prevent and control mold growth inside your home. [Learn more.](#)

Radon

About 1 in 10 homes in Wisconsin has high radon levels. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that can cause lung cancer. While you can't see it or smell it, you can protect yourself from it. Testing your home for radon is the only way to know your radon levels. [Learn more.](#)

Tobacco Smoke

The use of tobacco products in the home can have many dangerous health effects. Not only is smoking tobacco dangerous for the user, but secondhand smoke also poses a threat to nonsmoking adults and children. Secondhand smoke causes asthma attacks, cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and sudden infant death syndrome. Additionally, electronic cigarettes, sweet candy flavors, and other new and emerging products are hooking a new generation of youth. These products contain nicotine and are highly addictive. Fortunately, there are steps users can take to get help:

- [Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line](#) is a free service to help people quit smoking, vaping, or other tobacco use.
- Parents can learn more about vaping and how to help their kids through the [Tobacco is Changing Campaign](#).
- [Public and private multi-unit housing properties can implement smoke-free housing policies to protect their residents.](#)
- [Smokefree.gov](#)



Healthy Homes Topics

Private Well Water

Owners of private wells are responsible for maintaining and protecting their wells. While most private wells in Wisconsin provide safe drinking water, some may contain substances that can affect your health. Many of these substances do not affect the color, smell, or taste of the water. The only way to verify that well water is safe for drinking is to test regularly. Here are the testing recommendations:

- Test for [bacteria](#) at least once a year.
- Test for [nitrate](#) at least once a year.
- Test at least once for [arsenic](#) (and more often if it's found).
- Test for other [contaminants](#) depending on the well's location and age.

[Learn more](#) about private wells and maintaining your well's integrity.

Safe Use and Storage of Household Chemicals

Many household products are safe to use and have around. However, some products can cause harm if they are improperly used, stored, or thrown away. [Environmental Protection Agency's \(EPA\) Safer Choice](#) website has healthier alternatives for you, your family, and the environment. Learn more about [recycling and composting](#) to reduce waste.

Store chemicals away from children. Children are more susceptible to being harmed by chemicals since they are smaller and put a lot of items in their mouth.

Follow product labels. Product labels contain instructions on how to use that specific product. Pay attention to product warnings such as never mixing ammonia and bleach as it creates chlorine gas, which can be deadly.

Wisconsin Poison Control Number: 1-800-222-1222



Healthy Homes Topics

Asbestos

Asbestos can be found both in and outside the home. Exposure to asbestos can cause lung cancer. Asbestos is a mineral fiber that has often been added to various building products to strengthen them, provide heat insulation, and make them fire resistant. When asbestos-containing materials are disturbed during building maintenance, renovation, or demolition activities, fibers can be released into the air people breathe.

The [Wisconsin Department of Health Services Asbestos Program](#) helps protect people from exposure to asbestos by ensuring proper training and certification for persons and companies conducting regulated asbestos work.



Housing and Health Equity

The link between health and housing is influenced by structural and societal factors related to the type of housing and its location. Housing in the United States falls short of meeting the basic needs of many people and impacts their health and well-being. Racial and ethnic minorities in Wisconsin bear a greater burden of poor health outcomes that are linked to unsafe housing conditions, such as chronic disease, lead poisoning, and asthma. National Healthy Homes Month is an opportunity to draw attention to the role of healthy housing in reducing health inequities.

For more information and resources about the link between housing and health equity, view the American Public Health Association (APHA) publication: [*Creating The Healthiest Nation: Health and Housing Equity*](#).

Integrating Equity in Communications

Housing does not look the same for everyone. Some people own their homes, while others rent and housing includes single-family homes, apartments, group homes, mobile homes, duplexes, and dormitories, among others. Being inclusive of these different experiences throughout Healthy Homes communications materials can ensure the message is appropriate and impactful for all Wisconsinites.

In particular, when creating materials, consider including images of different kinds of housing and describing housing beyond the experience of living in a single-family home. In addition, be aware of how the action steps might be received differently for people who own their homes compared to people who rent. Adjusting the language to be inclusive of both experiences – or identifying different options based on renter or homeowner status – can make the actions more achievable for everyone.



8 Elements of a Healthy Home

1. **Keep it dry.** Prevent water from entering your home through leaks in roofing systems, rainwater from entering the home due to poor drainage, and check your interior plumbing for any leaking.
2. **Keep it clean.** Control the source of dust and contaminants, creating smooth and cleanable surfaces, reducing clutter, and using effective wet-cleaning methods.
3. **Keep it safe.** Store poisons out of the reach of children and properly label. Secure loose rugs and keep children's play areas free from hard or sharp surfaces. Install smoke and [carbon monoxide detectors](#) and keep fire extinguishers on hand.
4. **Keep it well-ventilated.** Ventilate bathrooms and kitchens and use whole house ventilation for supplying fresh air to reduce the concentration of contaminants in the home.
5. **Keep it pest-free.** All pests look for food, water, and shelter. Seal cracks and openings throughout the home; store food in pest-resistant containers. If needed, use sticky-traps and baits in closed containers, along with least toxic pesticides such as boric acid powder.
6. **Keep it contaminant-free.** Reduce [lead-related hazards in pre-1978 homes](#) by fixing deteriorated paint and keeping floors and window areas clean using wet-cleaning approach. Test your home for radon, a naturally occurring dangerous gas that enters homes through soil, crawlspaces, and foundation cracks. Install a radon removal system if levels above the EPA action-level are detected.
7. **Keep your home maintained.** Inspect, clean and repair your home routinely. Take care of minor repairs and problems before they become large repairs and problems.
8. **Keep it thermally controlled.** Houses that do not maintain adequate temperatures may place the safety of residents at increased risk from exposure to extreme cold or heat.



Tips for Engaging Local Partners

Coordinating with local partners on messaging and promotion will lead to a successful National Healthy Homes Month. These tips are examples of ways to engage your local partners.

- **Reach out to local partners** to learn more about the populations they serve and the specific healthy homes messaging your community needs.
- **Ask local partners to promote NHHM activities** and awareness through their communication channels such as newsletters and social media.
- **Use social media** and webpages to promote healthy homes activities.
- **Make an advocacy plan** and reach out to local elected officials to share the importance of healthy homes policies.
- **Provide healthy homes resources** and handouts to local health care providers to share with patients and families.
- **Host a webinar** on a healthy homes topic with subject matter experts. Invite local partners to share information on services and resources they can provide related to that topic.
- **Partner with local health departments**, community health centers, and health organizations to promote healthy homes messaging to the community members they serve.
- **Contact school districts** to discuss opportunities to share information about healthy homes with families.
- **Reach out to local businesses** that offer home improvement products or services such as home inspectors, realty companies, hardware stores, contractors, and the local chamber of commerce to share healthy homes resources through their communication channels.



Sample Social Media Posts

April is National Healthy Homes Month! Do you know what makes a healthy home? Learn more about home safety and how you can create a healthy home: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/safe-home.htm> #NHHM

You can help increase access to healthy housing by asking partners to promote #HealthyHomesMonth activities and awareness, share educational resources, connect with local officials and more. Learn more: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/safe-home.htm> #NHHM

Having a #HealthyHome includes knowing different healthy home strategies. Learn about lead, radon, asthma, allergies and more: <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/safe-home.htm> #NHHM

#DYK that there are eight principles for having a healthy home? Keep your home: dry, clean, safe, well-ventilated, pest-free, contaminant-free, maintained, and thermally controlled. https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/healthy_homes/healthyhomes #NHHM

Radon is a natural gas that comes from the ground. If your house is near an area with radon, it can enter your home through tiny cracks in your basement floor. Pick up a radon test kit to learn about the radon level in your home! <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/radon/radon-results.htm> #NHHM



Sample Social Media Posts

Lead poisoning impacts thousands of children under the age of six every year, but the good news is that lead poisoning is 100% preventable. Learn [about the steps you can take toward prevention: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/prevention.htm](https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/prevention.htm) #NHHM

Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health and can cause brain damage. Homes built before 1978 may contain lead paint. If you are planning to renovate or repair your home and it contains lead paint, learn how to do it safely. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/check-your-home.htm> #NHHM

#DYK that Black Wisconsinites have a rate of asthma-related hospitalizations six times higher than white Wisconsinites? This disparity is one result of long-term social and economic inequalities. Learn more about asthma disparities from the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program's surveillance brief: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01727.pdf #NHHM

Summer is here, meaning that allergies are getting worse! #DYK that your house may have hidden allergy and asthma triggers? Houses may have microscopic dust mites or hidden mold, which can trigger allergy or asthma symptoms. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/asthma/index.htm> #NHHM

Little pests can do big damage! Common pests such as cockroaches and weeds, as well as the chemicals used to control them, can trigger allergies and asthma. Integrated pest management (IPM) can help reduce the risks of pests: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/asthma/index.htm> #NHHM



Sample Social Media Posts

In Wisconsin, carbon monoxide poisonings are most likely to occur during the winter months and tend to happen more often in the northern and western counties of the state. Find out more about carbon monoxide poisoning and ways to prevent it from the Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01071a.pdf

You cannot see, taste or smell carbon monoxide, making it an invisible trigger. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can mimic a cold or allergies but can quickly progress to much worse. Learn about where carbon monoxide comes from and how to prevent poisoning: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/air/co.htm> #NHHM

Make your home a climate healthy home! Energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades can keep moisture out of your home, improve your health, save money, keep your house temps comfortable year-round, and reduce harmful carbon and air pollution. Learn more about climate change and healthy homes. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/safe-home.htm> #NHHM #HealthyHomes #ClimateChange

Climate change is bringing more frequent and intense rainfalls and floods to Wisconsin. To keep water and mold out of your home, slope soil and point downspouts away from the foundation, and plant native trees and plants to absorb water and cool your home. Learn more about creating a climate healthy home. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/environmental/safe-home.htm> #NHHM #HealthyHomes #ClimateChange



Sample News Release

News Release for National Healthy Homes Month

Release Date: April 1, 20XX

April is National Healthy Homes Month

Dateline/State In the U.S. today, people spend close to 90% of their time indoors. National Healthy Homes Month (NHHM), created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is an outreach campaign designed to help people connect the dots between their health and their home.

A healthy home is important to homeowners, renters, older persons, children, and others regardless of race, income, education, or social status. National Healthy Homes Month focuses on the importance of home assessments, and the impact awareness can have on your health. NHHM also empowers people to make change in order to create the healthiest home possible for themselves and their family.

Currently, millions of U.S. homes have moderate to severe physical housing problems, including dilapidated structure; roofing problems; heating, plumbing, and electrical deficiencies; water leaks and intrusion; pests; damaged paint; and high radon gas levels. These conditions are associated with a wide range of health issues, including unintentional injuries, respiratory illnesses like asthma and radon-induced lung cancer, and lead poisoning. The health and economic burdens from preventable hazards associated within home are considerable, and cost billions of dollars.

National Healthy Homes Month (NHHM) was established to focus national attention on ways to keep people of all ages safe and healthy in their home. It is aimed at boosting awareness and understanding of what federal and local resources are available. Visit the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services website](#) to download the Healthy Homes Toolkit for resources on promoting NHHM in your community.



Sample Proclamation

Proclamation of National Healthy Homes Month

Instructions for this proclamation: If you are interested in promoting Healthy Homes Month in your state or city, contact your governor's office or local council and ask how to submit a request for a Proclamation for Healthy Homes Month. Below is a sample proclamation. Items in blue require a choice and editing.

[Governor's] [City Council] Proclamation Proclaiming April as (Name of State or City) Healthy Homes Month

WHEREAS, home health and safety hazards, including physical safety hazards, lead-based paint, radon, mold, pests, and allergens, cause or contribute to a wide range of illnesses and diseases, including lead poisoning, asthma, cancer, and injuries;

WHEREAS, lead poisoning affects [thousands] [hundreds] of (name of state or city's) children under six;

WHEREAS, accidents in the home hurt [thousands] [hundreds] of (name of state or city's) people every year;

WHEREAS, many (name of state or city's) children die from chemicals stored and used improperly in the home;

WHEREAS, (dozens) of (name of state's) people die from carbon monoxide poisoning every year;

WHEREAS, many (name of state or city) families and households are unaware that their homes can have serious health hazards; and

WHEREAS, education and awareness about the dangers of unhealthy or unsafe housing can save (name of state or city) lives.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that [Governor (name of Governor)] [Mayor/Council (name of city)] proclaims June as (name of state or city) Healthy Homes Month; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that (name of state or city) citizens and government officials observe this month with appropriate programs and activities designed to enhance public awareness of home health and safety hazards and the ways we can protect our communities from these hazards.



Resources

Healthy Homes Web Tools

- [Healthy Homes, Improving Indoor Air Quality](#) (City of Fort Collins Environmental Services) This website is a do-it-yourself assessment tool. You can learn how to assess your home and then get list of no cost or low-cost recommendations to improve the air quality of your home.
- [Healthy Housing Inspection Manual](#) (U.S Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) The Healthy Homes Inspection Manual is a model reference tool that local jurisdictions or others may use as is or modify based on local needs. Use of the manual is expected to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the public health, housing management, and workforces that identify, prevent, and control health problems associated with housing. The manual does not introduce any inspection requirements, nor does it modify any existing inspection requirements for housing agencies, residents, HUD, or CDC. The manual is not a substitute for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) Minimum Property Standards. Finally, the manual does not propose to establish any regulatory authority for HUD or CDC with regard to residential inspection requirements. The Healthy Housing Inspection Manual takes environmental health professionals and housing managers, specialists, and inspectors through the elements of a holistic home inspection. It is also a useful tool for nurses, outreach workers, and others who are interested in preventing illness and injury due to residential healthy and safety hazards.



Resources

Fact Sheets

- [**A Healthy Home Checklist**](#) (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) This checklist and accompanying illustration show some key action steps to take in each room and area of the home so that you can have a safe and healthy home.
- [**A Healthy Home for Everyone-The Guide for Families and Individuals**](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) This guide provides information about the connection between housing and health. You will find action steps for making your home healthy, definitions for words used in the booklet, and a resource section to find more information about a making your home a healthy home.
- [**Wisconsin Healthy Housing Fact Sheet**](#) (National Center on Healthy Housing) This fact sheet includes stats and data on unhealthy home conditions in Wisconsin.

Websites

- [**Keep your Home Safe and Healthy**](#) (Wisconsin Department of Health Services) This website includes a graphic of common home issues that you should be aware of. There are links to corresponding webpages where you can learn more about these problems.
- [**Principles of a Healthy Home**](#) (National Center for Healthy Housing) Housing conditions can and should support good health. But what makes a healthy home environment? These principles provide a framework for describing the critical components of a healthy home.
- [**Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Data Portal**](#) (Wisconsin Environmental Public Health Tracking Program) Public environmental public health portal that houses current Wisconsin data on a variety of healthy homes topics such as asthma, carbon monoxide poisoning, lead poisoning, and radon.

