Spring is the perfect opportunity to assess your surroundings, especially your home, to find out what, if any, changes should be made to improve the health of everyone who lives there. This issue of Health and Safety News seeks to shed light eleven areas inside and outside homes that need to be monitored for health and safety. The areas featured include: the attic, basement, family/living room, kitchen, laundry area, stairs, bedroom, bathroom, pool, garage, and yard. The information for this edition was taken directly from the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [http://www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/) and [http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyHomes/ByRoom/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyHomes/ByRoom/index.html).

While reading this month’s issue, consider the question: How healthy is your home? Also, when reading each section, if there is information highlighted in blue, right click and select Open Hyperlink to read more about the topic.

**Attic**

**Health and Safety Tips:**
Seal gaps around roofing, attic spaces, windows, and doors to prevent rodents and insects from entering the house.

Clean up clutter to prevent rodents and insects from finding places to nest.
Find out whether your insulation could contain asbestos. If so, it is safest to leave the material alone. Consult an experienced contractor if it must be removed or disturbed.

Ensure proper ventilation in the attic to prevent excessive moisture that can promote mold growth.

Basement/Utility Room

Health and Safety Tips:

- Test your home for radon gas. If levels are above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency action level, install a radon mitigation system.
- Have gas appliances professionally installed, vented outside, and checked annually for carbon monoxide leaks.
- Install smoke alarms on every floor, including basements.
- Store pesticides and chemicals out of reach of children to prevent poisoning.
- Control rodents and insects by sealing holes and gaps in floors and walls to keep pests out, which also reduces pesticide use.
- Clean up clutter to prevent rodents and insects from finding places to nest.
- Keep water heater temperature set at 120°F to prevent scalds.
- Prevent fall injuries by installing stair rails.
- Keep cleaning supplies out of reach of children.
Family/Living Room

Health and Safety Tips:

- Improve air quality:
  - Do not allow smoking in your home, especially if children are present.
  - Vacuum carpets frequently to remove allergens that trigger asthma attacks and allergic reactions.
- Protect your children from lead poisoning by painting before old paint chips and peels in older homes.
- Protect your children from strangulation by moving blind cords out of reach.

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Kitchen

Health and Safety Tips:

- Prevent fires by keeping flammable objects away from the stove.
- Keep cleaning products out of reach of children.
- Keep medications out of reach of children.
- Properly store and prepare foods.
- Wash your hands.
- Know if your drinking water comes from a private well. If so, test it for contaminants.
- Place smoke alarms in the kitchen and cook with care.
Laundry Area

Health and Safety Tips:

- Vent the clothes dryer outside the home to prevent mold and mildew.
- Keep cleaning supplies out of reach of children. (American Association of Poison Control Centers)
- Wash sheets and blankets in hot water weekly to reduce asthma triggers.
Stairs

Health and Safety Tips:

- **Prevent fall injuries:**
  - Install stair rails.
  - Have good lighting.
  - Keep stairs in good repair. (Home Safety Council)
  - Keep stairs free of clutter. (Home Safety Council)
- **Use safety gates** at the top and bottom of stairs if young children live in or visit your home.

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Bedroom

Health and Safety Tips:

- Place smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms. Place carbon monoxide detectors near bedrooms.
- **Adopt a smoke-free policy** in your home, especially if children are present.
- **Select and maintain a safe crib for your baby.**
- Use mattress and pillow covers to help prevent asthma attacks.
• Vacuum carpets frequently to remove allergens that trigger asthma attacks and allergic reactions.
• Protect your children from lead poisoning by painting before old paint chips and peels in older homes.

Bathroom

Health and Safety Tips:

• Keep medicines out of reach of children.
• Dispose of expired medicines properly.
• Install grab bars in showers and tubs and next to toilets; use nonslip mats in bathtubs and showers and on floors.
• Keep cleaning products out of reach of children.
• Check water temperature before putting young children into the bathtub.
• Supervise young children in bathtubs.
• Wash hands to prevent the spread of many illnesses.
• Ventilate the room to prevent mold and mildew.
• Know if your drinking water comes from a private well. If so, test it for contaminants.
Health and Safety Tips:

- Always watch young children while they are swimming or playing in or around water.
- Teach your children to swim.
- Teach your children about water and pool safety rules.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Put a high fence all the way around your pool and use a self-closing or self-latching gate.
- Keep lifesaving equipment, including a life ring, pole, rope, and personal flotation devices (PFDs), by the pool.
- Protect your family against recreational water illnesses by safely maintaining your pool and pool area.

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Health and Safety Tips:

- **Never run lawn mowers and other combustion devices inside the garage.** Always operate a safe distance from windows and doors.
- Run cars and trucks **only** outside the garage and away from any openings into the house to **prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.**
- **Store pesticides and other chemicals out of reach of children.**
- **Control rodents and insects** by eliminating sources of food and water and sealing holes in walls to keep them out.
Yard

Health and Safety Tips:

- Know if you have a septic tank. If so, properly maintain it to prevent illness.
- Know if your drinking water comes from a private well. If so, test it for contaminants.
- Prevent falls:
  - Keep porches, stairs, walks, and driveways in good repair and well lit.
  - Install handrails on both sides of stairs.
  - Keep stairs clear of clutter.
- Supervise children in play areas at all times.
- Make sure the surfaces on your child's playground are safe.
- Remove litter, tall grass, and brush to eliminate rodent and wild animal nesting sites outside the home.
- Keep gutters clean and get rid of old tires and other containers that collect water where mosquitoes breed.

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