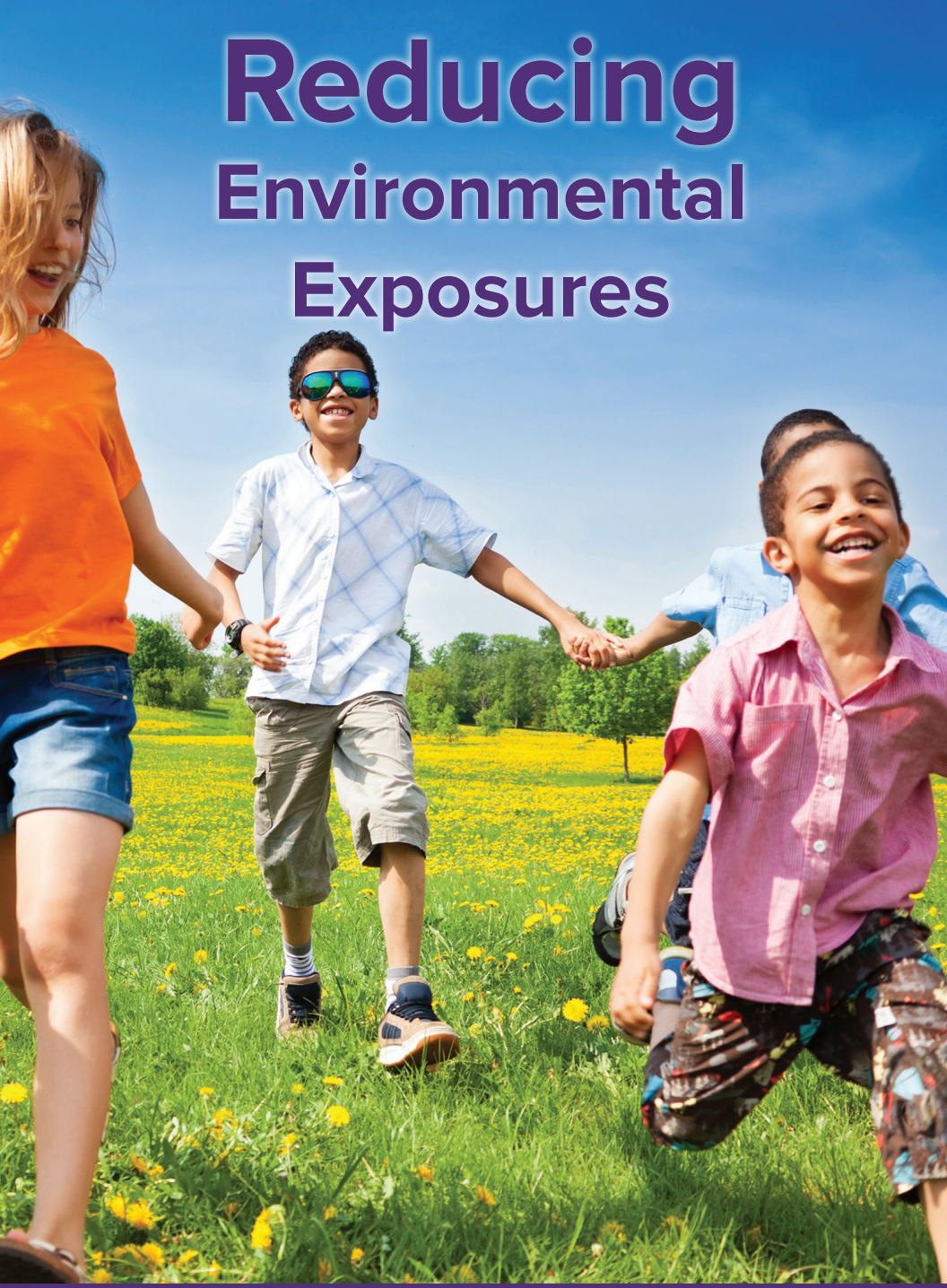
Reducing Environmental Exposures



The Seven Best Kid-Friendly Practices

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

The purpose of this brochure is to increase your awareness of the chemicals around you and your kids, and how you may be exposed to them. There are three main ways anyone can be exposed by:

1. breathing
2. eating or drinking
3. contact with the skin.

Some exposures may be obvious to you, like those that come from pesticides or gasoline fumes, while other exposures may come from products you use frequently, but don't often think about.

The link between exposure to environmental chemicals and childhood illness or disability is not always clear and depends on many factors. However, applying good habits around the home or school makes good sense and can reduce exposures.

Remember, children are at greater risk from chemicals found in food, water, dirt, and air for several reasons:

- for their size, children eat, drink, and breathe more than grown-ups;
- they crawl on floors, play in dirt, and put their hands in their mouths; and
- their bodies are still developing.

The more you can reduce unnecessary exposures to commonly used chemicals or other hazardous substances, the healthier the environment will become for you and your children. Providing a healthy environment for our children is a goal we all share.

Visit www.health.ny.gov/EHKids for more resources about reducing environmental exposures.

Keep It Out

The best way to reduce exposure to chemicals is to keep them out of your surroundings.

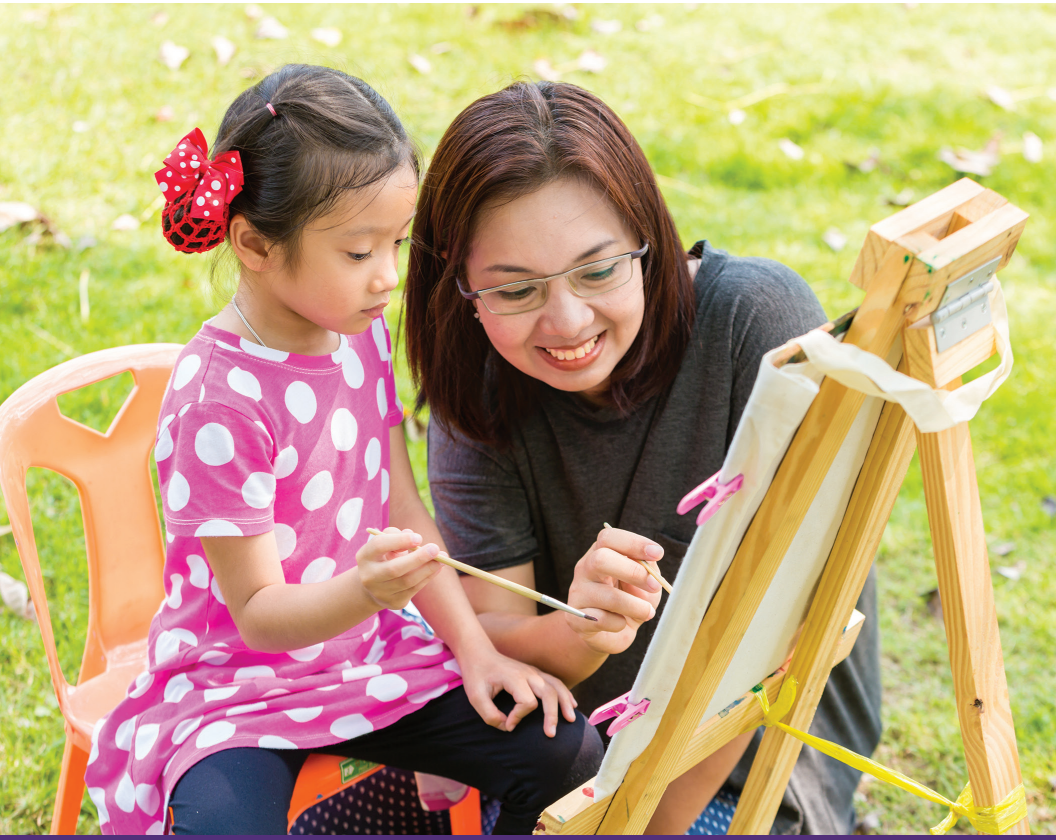
For Example	What can I do?
Secondhand smoke	Go outside if you or others choose to smoke. There is NO safe level of exposure to cigarette smoke.
Contaminants tracked in from outside, such as lawn pesticides and lead dust from work or home renovation	Use a doormat, remove shoes at the door, and plant shrubs and grass to help reduce dust levels and limit the potential to track dust indoors.
Spray drift from pesticide applications on neighboring properties	Avoid the area when spraying takes place and for 30 minutes afterwards. Before spraying begins, close windows and doors and turn off window-style air conditioning units; keep closed for 30 minutes after spraying. Bring in items that are outdoors (like laundry and children's toys) before the spraying occurs.
Gasoline fumes from power equipment such as lawnmowers and snow blowers	Use proper storage containers for gasoline and store it in a shed or garage, along with power equipment. Adults should be the only ones to refuel equipment.
Mercury spills from broken thermometers, thermostats, blood pressure units, barometers, and gas pressure regulators	NEVER use a vacuum cleaner, mop, or broom to clean up a mercury spill. Replace mercury thermometers with digital types and dispose of old ones properly. Follow NYS DOH's *Guidelines for Cleanup of Mercury Spills* (www.health.ny.gov/environmental/chemicals/mercury/cleanup.htm).
Smoke from burning trash, which can contain harmful chemicals like arsenic, carbon monoxide, cyanide, dioxins, formaldehyde, and PCBs	Reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost when possible. Dispose of remaining trash at a transfer station or with a sanitation service. Remember, backyard burning is not allowed in New York State.

Choose, Use Wisely, Reduce

Make conscious choices about your chemical use. Choose less toxic alternatives where possible. Choose not to use certain products if and when you can.

For Example	What can I do?
Cleaning products	Keep only a few products on hand and use them sparingly. Find products with ingredients that work well and are safer for human health and the environment. Look for EPA's Safer Choice label (www.epa.gov/saferchoice).
Pesticides	Prevent pest problems by cleaning your home, yard, and garden to minimize areas where pests can live. Try using non-chemical methods like weeding, mulching, setting traps, and using a flyswatter. Learn about integrated pest management techniques (IPM) through Cornell Cooperative Extension (albany.cce.cornell.edu/gardening/pests-ipm).
Insect repellents	Do not overuse repellent. Only apply as much as you need to provide protection. You can always reapply if needed. Use DEET products containing no more than 30-35% DEET. Spray small amounts of repellent on your hands and then apply to children, avoiding their eyes and mouth. If pregnant or expecting to become pregnant, ask your physician about insect repellent use.
Air fresheners, deodorizers, and candles	If you can smell them, know that artificial scents or odors may be made up of chemicals. Remember, nothing freshens a room like fresh air. Levels of chemicals decrease faster if you open windows or doors.

Personal care products	Ask yourself, are all the products you use really necessary (hair spray, powders, perfumes)? Many personal care products contain chemicals. Chemicals can enter the body by breathing, touching or swallowing them.
Art supplies	Use smelly art supplies in well-ventilated areas. Choose art supplies that say “conforms to the federal ASTM D-4236 standard” on the package.
Chemical contaminants, such as PCBs and dioxins, as well as mercury, in sportfish and game	Lower contaminants in a meal of sportfish and game by properly trimming, skinning, and cooking your catch. Reduce mercury intake by eating fish that are less contaminated. Read NYS DOH’s advice at www.health.ny.gov/fish.



Air It Out

Remember to ventilate your home when using chemicals or other contaminants.

For Example	What can I do?
Paints, wood finishing products, cleaning products, and hobby supplies	Use these products outdoors or in a well-ventilated area. Do indoor painting and finishing projects during warmer months when windows can be left open for better ventilation.
New carpets, furniture, and building materials	Unroll new carpets or put new furniture outside (in a shed or detached garage) before bringing them into the home, since they can "offgas" – slowly release chemicals into the air. If that's not possible, open windows, close doors, and try to stay out of the rooms until odors are reduced. It may be necessary to ventilate the areas with the new products for longer, because chemical levels can build up again after the windows are closed.

Wet, Wipe, & Wash

Wash your hands, fruits and vegetables, toys, and home surfaces to reduce chemical exposures.

For Example	What can I do?
Contaminants on and in food, such as bacteria and pesticides	Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting, or cooking. Do not use soap, detergent, or commercial produce washes when washing fruits and vegetables. It is not necessary and may contribute to greater chemical residues. Follow FDA's tips for cleaning fruits and vegetables (www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm256215.htm).
Lead dust and chemical residues	Wash your hands, your children's hands, and toys with soap and water frequently. Damp mop floors. Wash window sills, including the area between the sill and the outside window or screen. If you work with lead, wash your clothes separately.

Keep Kids Away

If you need to use products that contain hazardous substances, keep children from getting too near while the product is in storage or in use.

For Example	What can I do?
Household products such as glass cleaners, oven cleaners, drain openers, floor/furniture polish, bleaches, dishwasher detergents, carpet cleaners, etc.	Put locks on cabinets and store products out of children's reach. Dispose of unused and unwanted products properly. Read *Managing and Disposing of Household Hazardous Waste* (www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/hhwma.pdf) for more information.
Pesticides such as flea/tick controls, lawn pesticides, and indoor pesticides	Read and follow directions on the product label carefully. Keep children away from areas where pesticides and spray or spot treatments are being used. Remove toys and stuffed animals before you treat the area. Children should not touch flea/tick collars or any repellents used on your pets.

Find It, Fix It

Seek out the potential sources of trouble in and around your home and fix any problems before they start.

For Example	What can I do?
Radon gas	Test your home for radon every few years and re-test after remodeling, weatherizing, or radon mitigation (reduction). Low-cost test kits are available from NYS DOH (www.health.ny.gov/environmental/radiological/radon/testkit.htm)
Carbon monoxide (CO) and other emissions from furnaces, appliances, space heaters, fireplaces, and wood burning stoves	Have a trained professional inspect, clean, and tune-up your central heating system (furnace, flue, and chimney) every year. Never use a generator inside your home, garage, crawlspace, shed, or similar areas. Place a CO alarm on each level of your home and outside each sleeping area.
Molds (which can trigger allergies or asthma)	Prevent mold growth by finding the source of the leak or moisture and repairing it. Use a dehumidifier and make sure to empty the reservoir and clean it frequently. Remember: mold spores can grow on any surface in your home that has sufficient moisture or is wet. For more information, read *Mold and Your Home: What You Need to Know* (www.health.ny.gov/publications/7287/).
Indoor fuel oil storage	Make sure your fuel oil is delivered properly and that there are not any leaks on the floor near your fuel tank. Clean up any spills completely. Read *What Homeowners Need to Know about Fuel Oil Spills and Flooding* (www.health.ny.gov/publications/2752/).

Playground equipment, decks, and furniture made with chromated copper arsenate (CCA), often referred to as pressure-treated or chemically-treated wood	Apply a penetrating protective coating (such as an oil- or water-based stain) on a regular basis to your structures made with CCA treated wood. This may reduce the leaching or leaking of chemicals. Seek out alternative kinds of wood to rebuild decks and furniture, if possible. Choose playground equipment made from plastic (recycled if possible), metal, or untreated natural wood.
Chemical and bacterial contaminants in drinking water wells	Test your well water at the tap at least once a year for bacteria and every 3-5 years for other contaminants, like arsenic and lead. Testing your drinking water is the only way to make sure that your water remains suitable for household uses. Read *Test Your Well: Protect Your Family's Water* (www.health.ny.gov/PrivateWells).
Removing lead-based paint	Use wet techniques for small jobs involving the removal of lead-based paint. For larger jobs, such as renovation projects, use professional help. Read *What You Need to Know About Working with Lead-based Paint* (www.health.ny.gov/publications/2502/).

Talk to Your Provider

Remember that your healthcare provider is an important partner in understanding how to reduce exposures that can harm your family's health. Talk to your provider about what you read in this book, including the important issues below.

For Example	What can I do?
Potential radiation exposure from computed tomography (CT) procedures	Be aware of radiation safety issues for children and talk to your pediatrician about which imaging options are appropriate for your child.
Allergies or asthma triggers	Talk to your pediatrician about what makes your child's allergies and asthma worse. Learn how to avoid or control these triggers in your home or when outside and reduce asthma and allergy attacks.
Concerns during pregnancy	If you are pregnant or expecting to become pregnant, ask your physician about environmental exposures that may be a special concern. For example, learn about pregnancy and use of insect repellents, eating locally-caught fish, exposure to lead, and mercury, and other chemicals.

Be Prepared

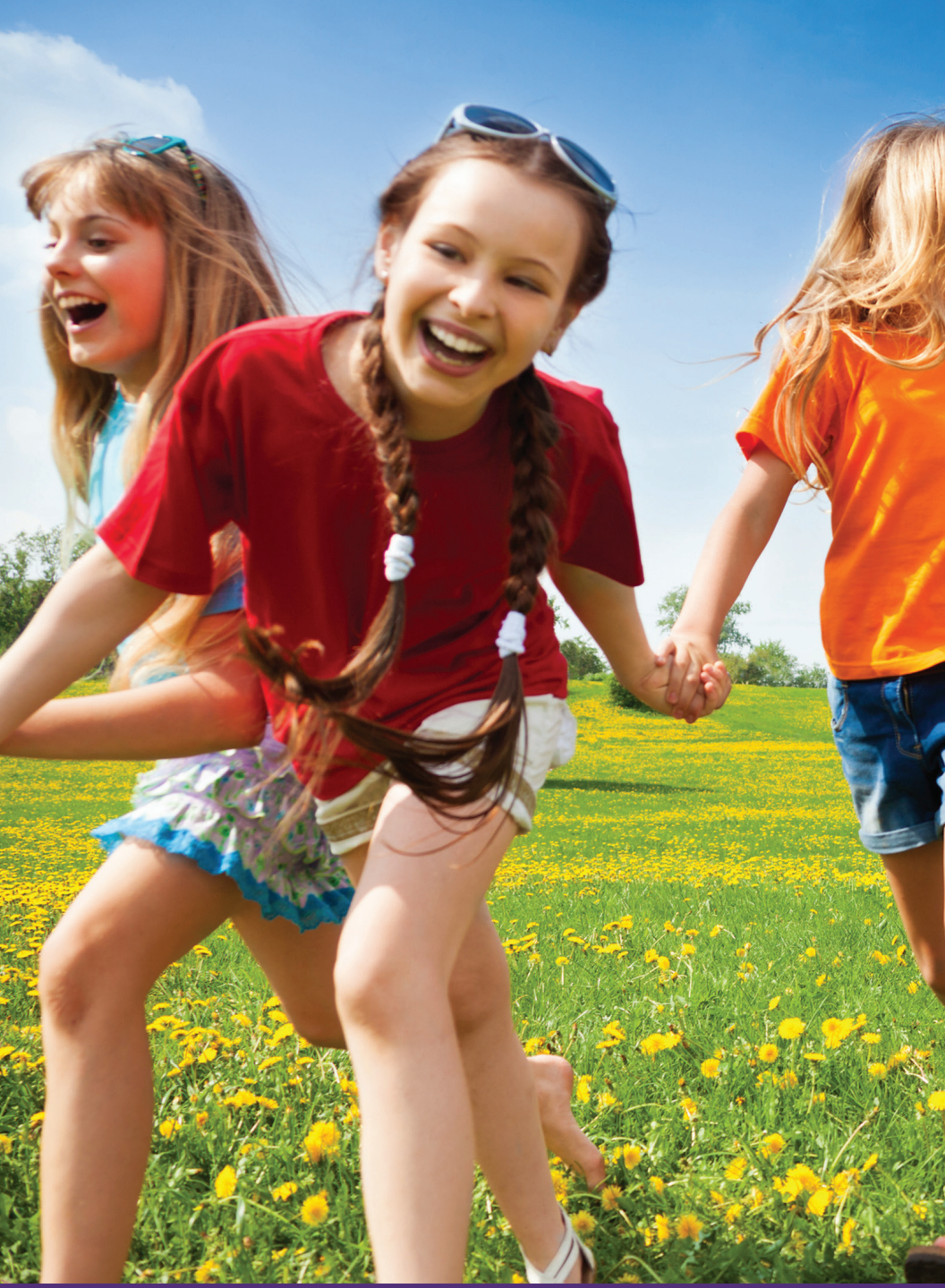
Prepare for emergencies that could affect you and your family.

Nationwide Poison Control Center Phone Number	1-800-222-1222
Hospital	
Family Physicians	
Police Department	
Pharmacy	
Medical Insurance Company	
Emergency Contacts	
Local Health Department	

Kid-Friendly Practices +

Other good practices for kids.

Sun Safety	www.health.ny.gov/publications/0472
Helmets	www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/children/toolkits/bicycle_safety/index.htm
Seatbelts	www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/seatbelt.htm
Car Seats	www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/child_passenger_safety_-_a_parents_primer.htm
Nutrition & Exercise	www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/resources/eat_well_play_hard/kids.htm
Vaccination	www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/child-adolescent.html
Injury Prevention	www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/children
Clean, Green, & Healthy Schools	www.health.ny.gov/environmental/indoors/healthy_schools/index.htm
Extreme Cold	www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeCold
Extreme Heat	www.health.ny.gov/ExtremeHeat



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