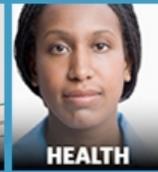


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Savannah & Hilton Head's Parenting Magazine



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JUNE 2009: Make Sure Your Home is Ready for Your New Baby

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By Idan Shpizear

We can all agree there's probably no greater joy in life than having a baby. You want to give them every opportunity to thrive and succeed in life, and it all starts with the moment you come home with your newborn in tow.

If you have a child on the way, or already have children of your own, there are some important steps you should take to ensure your child's safety in the home environment – beyond the obvious dangers that childproofing can fix. Unfortunately, in most homes, there are many invisible and airborne hazards that exist and often go unexamined. Here is a quick summary of easy things you can do which will significantly improve both your and your baby's health:

1. Purchase an air purifier and test your air quality.
Clean air and a baby's immune system are inextricably linked. It is very important that a baby breathe clean air so that her developing lungs and immune system have time to rest and rejuvenate. At the very least, the room where the baby sleeps should have a high quality air purifier. An effective air purifying system will help maintain your home environment and keep it free from contaminants that can enter through windows or doors. There's some concern that if a baby's room is too clean, the child won't develop the natural immunities required to for good general health. However, that argument doesn't pertain to airborne particles. Breathing in dust, pollens, mold spores and pet allergens are bad for adults with healthy systems, but for babies, whose lungs are still growing, they can lead to greatly weakened systems and may affect the child's health later in life.

Air testing is the best way of measuring the indoor air quality of our homes. A certified specialist can take samples and then provide you with the most efficient and effective way to eliminate or clean any dangerous particles. When you consult with an air testing specialist, look for an endorsement from the IICRC (Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification).

Additionally, if you want to purify the air through your heating/air conditioning system, we'd also recommend you purchase a UVC Silent Light. This is an air purifying system made for air ducts and designed to sterilize and significantly reduce the quantity of microorganisms as they pass through the system, creating better overall indoor air quality.

2. Test for mold (visible and non-visible), mildew, fungal infestation, etc.
Mold has become one of the leading problems in most homes across the country, and too often it is discovered only after health problems begin to show up. You should be aware that most mold grows on wood, fiber or paper that has remained wet for more than a few days. Tiny mold spores float through the air and land on inviting damp spots. As the mold matures, it may produce spores of its own which are easily blown up into ventilation systems and are distributed throughout the home.

The only way to get rid of the mold permanently is to get rid of the moisture: fix leaks and seepage, even if it involves landscaping around basements. Put plastic over dirt in crawlspaces and keep them well ventilated. Use exhaust fans in your kitchen and bathrooms. Turn off humidifiers if you see condensation on the windows. Use dehumidifiers and air conditioners, especially in hot, humid climates. Finally, pay special attention to carpet on concrete floors. Use area rugs that can be lifted and washed, or install a vapor barrier over the concrete.

3. Get your carpet cleaned.
Cleaning your carpet and area rugs will get rid of any dust, dust mites and other germs or bacteria that have fallen to the floor. These things, when stirred up by crawling babies, may become harmful to your baby's general health. Dirty carpets can trap chemical and biological pollutants that are carried in the air or tracked in from the outside. Damp, dirty carpets are an excellent breeding ground for these biological pollutants. For these reasons, it is important to have regular cleanings to help reduce these problems.

4. Air duct cleaning and decontamination.
Air duct cleaning is an important part of home maintenance that is unfortunately overlooked by the vast majority of homeowners. A dirty air duct can lower the quality of the air in your house as it promotes the circulation of allergens

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and bacteria in the air. We strongly recommend having all the air duct vents in your home cleaned out before your newborn comes home.

Cleaning your air ducts thoroughly and performing seasonal decontamination will greatly reduce the amount of airborne debris that may be harmful to the respiratory health of your entire family, including your sensitive newborn.

The following signs indicate the need for a thorough air duct cleaning:

- The growth of mold inside the ducts or on the surface of the cooling or heating system.
- Infestation of insects or small unwanted pests in the ducts.
- A great deal of dust or other debris clogging or reducing air flow through the vents.

5. Use green products.

Did you know that a nationwide study of randomly selected umbilical cord blood samples obtained from the American Red Cross by the Environmental Working Group revealed 287 industrial chemicals passed through the mother's placenta into the womb? Not only are newborn babies starting life with a toxic overload, but possibly one out of eight is born prematurely, due in part to these poisons.

The chemicals used in our household cleaning supplies, including mutagens that cause permanent genetic cell changes, and endocrine disrupters which can mimic, block or interfere with natural hormone function, are currently sabotaging our environment.

To reduce exposure to harmful common household cleaning supplies such as bleach, detergents, etc., we strongly recommend using eco-friendly organic products.

Idan Shpizear is owner of 911 Restoration (www.911Restoration.com), one of the leading certified mold and water damage restoration companies with over 30 years of experience, specializing in both commercial and residential properties.

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