

# LIVING WITH CANCER

## healthier products for your home

We spend roughly 90% of our time indoors. Yet, the products we bring into our homes may have chemicals linked to cancer and other diseases.

As someone living with cancer, lifestyle changes are important for keeping you healthy – eating fruits and vegetables, keeping a healthy weight, staying away from tobacco smoke, and limiting your alcoholic drinks. Staying healthy also means using safer products in your home and making sure other substances, such as radon, are kept at bay.

**Use this fact sheet to help understand risks for cancer in our homes.**

Although it is nearly impossible to fix and replace all sources of concern, making healthier choices when household items need to be replaced helps to minimize overall risks. Become a champion for cancer prevention and encourage friends and family to do the same.



Cancer & Environment Network  
of Southwestern Pennsylvania

LEAVE YOUR SHOES  
AT THE DOOR –  
don't bring toxic  
contaminants inside.

ELIMINATE  
SMOKING



OPT FOR FURNITURE MADE  
WITH SOLID WOOD AND  
WITHOUT FLAME RETARDANTS



USE SAFER PERSONAL CARE  
AND COSMETIC PRODUCTS



PROTECT YOUR HOME FROM  
RADON AND OTHER INDOOR AIR  
POLLUTANT SOURCES.



USE SAFER COOKING, BAKING  
AND FOOD STORAGE ITEMS



SUPPORT EFFORTS WORKING  
TO MINIMIZE AIR POLLUTION  
IN THE REGION

USE NON-TOXIC  
PESTICIDE ALTERNATIVES



USE SAFER HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS  
FOR CLEANING, HOME REPAIR  
AND TO CONTROL PESTS



**BEDROOM**

**SELECT FLAME RETARDANT-FREE FURNITURE.**  
Cover any exposed foam.

**FURNITURE SHOULD BE MADE OF NATURAL WOODS & LOW VOC FINISHES**

**Select flame retardant-free furniture and mattresses.** Wood furniture made from plywood or particle board can contain **formaldehyde**. Use solid wood furniture, instead.

Crib mattresses made with polyurethane foam can also contain various chemical additives, including toxic **flame retardants**. Crib mattresses must meet federal flammability standards, yet safer flame retardant such as wool are preferred.

**Furniture should be made of natural wood.** Plywood and particle board may contain **formaldehyde**. All furniture, including baby furniture should be finished with paints or stains labelled "low or no **volatile organic compounds (VOCs)**".

**KITCHEN**

**USE GLASS.**  
Avoid plastic containers.

**USE CAST IRON, GLASS, STAINLESS STEEL OR CERAMIC PANS** when cooking instead of non-stick/ teflon pans.

**Use glass containers.** Plastic containers, can contain polycarbonate (#7) that may include **bisphenol A (BPA)** that is linked to cancer.

**Use cast iron, glass, stainless steel or ceramic pans.** Some non-stick pans may contain **per-and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS)** which are toxic.

**LAUNDRY/CLEANING**

**CLEAN WITH NATURAL PRODUCTS** such as vinegar, baking soda, lemon & hydrogen peroxide.

**DUST FREQUENTLY** with microfiber cloths & a wet mop to remove toxics.

**USE LOW OR NO VOC** paints, glues & adhesives.

**USE TRAPS, BARRIERS, & NONCHEMICAL PESTICIDES** to get rid of pests.

**Clean with natural products.** Some cleaning products may contain ingredients that have been linked to cancer, including **formaldehyde** & **1,4-dioxane**. **Fragrances** may contain carcinogenic compounds in the mixture of ingredients.

**Dust frequently.** **Flame retardants** are used in electronics, upholstered furniture, carpets & other products in the home. These will degrade over time & become part of house dust. Regular cleaning, including dusting & vacuuming with a HEPA filter removes these potential carcinogens from your home.

**Use traps, barriers and non-chemical pesticides.** Some home and garden pesticides have been linked to cancer.

Use paints, glues and adhesives labelled "low" or "no" **VOCs**. **VOCs** (known as volatile organic compounds) are harmful chemicals that vaporize at room temperature. These chemicals can also continue to be released into the air we breathe through a process called off-gassing over the course of months or years.

**LIVING ROOM**

**USE AN ELECTRIC, ductless heating unit** instead of a wood stove or fireplace.

**TEST YOUR HOME FOR RADON.**  
This naturally occurring gas is a leading cause of lung cancer.

**CHOOSE NATURAL FLOORING** such as hardwood, linoleum or tile & natural rugs like wool.

**Test your home for radon.** Exposure to **radon** is a known cause of lung cancer in the SW PA region. It is important to test your home and & install a mitigation system if levels are high.

**Use an electric, ductless heating unit.** Wood smoke from wood stoves and fireplaces contain dozens of chemicals that have been linked to cancer, including **polyaromatic hydrocarbons** & **fine particulate matter**.

**Choose natural flooring.** Stain-resistant carpets and & rugs can be made using **per-and poly-fluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS)**. Some of these substances have been linked to cancer but & the majority of PFAS have never been tested for carcinogenicity.

**BATHROOM**

**CHOOSE A FABRIC OR NYLON** shower curtain instead of vinyl.

**USE PERSONAL CARE & COSMETIC PRODUCTS** labeled free from fragrance, parabens & phthalates.

**USE SULFATE FREE** soaps & shampoos

**Choose a fabric or nylon shower curtain.** Vinyl shower curtains may contain **phthalates**. Some phthalates have been linked to cancer and other diseases, such as asthma.

**Use personal care and cosmetic products labeled free from fragrances, parabens, phthalates and sulfates.** **Fragrances** may contain carcinogenic compounds in the mixture of ingredients. Creams, lotions, ointments and other cosmetics or personal care products can contain **parabens** and **phthalates**, which can disrupt the endocrine system and may also contribute to cancer and other diseases. Phthalates can also be found in products such as nail polish, so make sure the label reads, "SLS-free, SLES-free" or "Sulfate-free". **1-4 dioxane** is a carcinogen that can be a chemical contaminant of sodium laureth sulfate which is used as a foaming agent in many soaps, so make sure the label reads, "SLS-free, SLES-free" or Sulfate-free".

**OUTDOORS/GARDEN**

**AVOID EXERCISING ON DAYS WITH AIR POLLUTION ALERTS** or near heavy traffic areas.

**USE NON-TOXIC ALTERNATIVES** to control weeds, insects and other pests in the garden.

**Avoid exercising on days with air pollution alerts and support advocacy efforts to help stop air pollution.** Check air quality alerts for where you live at [www.AirNow.gov](http://www.AirNow.gov). Exposure to **air pollution** is a known cause of cancer and exposure can be minimized by avoiding exercising when air quality is poor and also avoiding activities near high-traffic areas. Whenever possible, lend your voice and support to advocacy efforts that are working to minimize industrial and vehicular air pollutant emissions in the region.

**Use non-toxic alternatives to control weeds, insects and other pests in the garden.** Learn about **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**, a strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of pests or their damage, using chemical pesticides as a last resort.

# Creating a safer home may seem overwhelming.

## Here are some resources to help:



Environmental Working Group (EWG)  
Environmental Working Group (EWG) created the tools below to provide an easy way to compare and select products with safer ingredients and materials.

**Skin Deep (Database)**  
**Healthy Living (Mobile App)**  
**Home Guide**



Healthy Building Network (HBN) Analyzes chemical hazards, industry and manufacturing trends, as well as the environmental and health impacts of products.

**Home Free Product Guide**

Pharos provides hazard, use, and exposure information on 135,836 chemicals and 172 different kinds of building products.



Products carrying the Made Safe label are certified to be free of harmful ingredients.

**Certified Products (Database)**



Silent Spring's Detox Me  
This is a mobile app that provides simple, research-based tips on how to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals



If you shop online, download this tool and it will let you know if your cart has any unsafe ingredients.

**Clearya (Chrome or Mobile App)**



Women for a Healthy Environment Provides guidance and resources for purchasing safer alternatives.

**Guide to a Healthy Home Toxins to Avoid**

While it is important to make small changes where possible, the United States is failing to implement policies and regulations that protect individuals from exposure to hazardous chemicals. Unlike many European countries, the US allows products to contain chemicals that are known to be harmful and linked to cancer and other diseases. Use your voice to demand change. Here's how:

[saferchemicals.org/get-involved](http://saferchemicals.org/get-involved)



# Cancer & Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania

## **MORE INFORMATION**

[www.censwpa.org](http://www.censwpa.org) | [info@censwpa.org](mailto:info@censwpa.org)

