

The cleanse lowers what goes into your body. This handout lowers what surrounds it. Indoor air pollution is a more consistent threat to your health than outdoor pollution, and most of it comes from things you chose and can change: cleaners, carpets, furniture, and pesticides. Start with whatever you replace next — you don't have to do this all at once.

General Measures

- **Replace toxic cleaners and pesticides** with natural alternatives — one of the most important things you can do to reduce your toxin exposure.
- **Leave shoes at the door.** It reduces tracked-in lead, dust, and pesticides by a factor of 10–20.
- **Ventilate.** Good ventilation dilutes toxins with clean air. A central vacuum or HEPA vacuum also minimizes pollutants in the air.
- **Keep the temperature at 65°F or below** where practical, to reduce evaporation and concentration of toxic gases.
- **Keep humidity below 50%** to reduce evaporation and dust mite proliferation.
- **Filter all public water** to remove toxic particles, chemicals, and microorganisms.
- **Full-spectrum lights** reduce eye strain and increase UV absorption.
- **Reduce electromagnetic exposure** from leaking microwaves, electric blankets, and other electrical appliances.
- **Air filter:** a high-quality unit such as an IQAir is the one Dr. Sherri recommends. Ask us for help choosing the right unit for your space.

Furniture, Toys & Bedding

Much of today's furniture is made of composite materials — wood chips held together with toxin-containing glue. If furniture containing pressboard or plywood is less than a couple of years old, it's releasing formaldehyde, a carcinogen, into the air you breathe. The simple short-term solution: keep the house well ventilated, and bring houseplants (especially spider plants) into rooms with new furniture or carpet. Plastic toys and furniture out-gas too — set new items in strong sunlight for a day or two before bringing them inside, and wash plastic toys thoroughly.

- On the bed, use a spring, foam, or waterbed mattress. Wash sheets in very hot water and dry on the hot cycle to destroy mites.
- Use plastic-type enclosed dust-mite casings on mattresses, box springs, and pillows.
- Use hypoallergenic synthetic pillows instead of feather pillows if you're not using dust-mite encasements.
- Use only washable non-wool blankets. Skip down comforters.

Floor Coverings

New carpet is a heavy contributor to toxic load, especially in rooms where you spend a lot of time, like your bedroom. If you're considering new flooring, look first at natural-fiber carpet or other natural floor coverings. Hardwood finished with a nontoxic coating is attractive, durable, and safe; so are tile floors, which damp-mop easily. Area rugs in strategic spots keep your feet warm and soften noise.

If you still want carpet, choose nylon with jute backing — or better, natural carpets of untreated wool, cotton, sea grass, or sisal with natural latex backing. Ask for "rag pad" padding, made from recycled rags and polypropylene felt. Have carpet installed in summer, when you can leave windows open while the new carpet is out-gassing most. If you live in a manufactured home or newly built house, plywood in the walls, cabinets, and subfloor is out-gassing too — consider a high-quality air filter, and replace furnace and air conditioning filters regularly.

Cleaners, polishes, and pesticides are significant sources of toxins in the home. Chemicals in cleaners are often complex, unnamed compounds — strong acids in drain cleaners, bases in oven cleaners, petroleum distillates in "grease cutters." Avoid detergents with mercury, phosphates, and heavy metals like arsenic and zinc. Your skin and lungs absorb what you use. The next time you run out of a product, replace it with something less harmful — often as simple as white vinegar or baking soda from any grocery store.

Bathroom

- For tile and bathroom fixtures, use baking soda dissolved in water, applied on a damp cloth.
- For the toilet bowl: baking soda and vinegar, or lemon juice and borax. Flat cola poured in the bowl and left for an hour, then brushed and flushed, also works.
- Pour boiling water directly down the drain (not into the basin) twice weekly to prevent clogs. Use a drain strainer to catch food and hair.
- To clear a clogged drain, use a metal snake or plunger.

Kitchen

- Clean the oven with baking soda: mix three tablespoons with one cup warm water and rub gently with steel wool. Use oven liners or foil to catch spills; sprinkle salt on spills while the oven is warm, then scrape and wipe once cool. Borax is also a good grease cutter.
- Mop with one cup of white vinegar in two gallons of water to remove dull, greasy film.

Laundry & Furniture Care

- Use dry bleach, borax, or washing soda to whiten clothes. Chlorine bleach gives off fumes that irritate the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs — and never combine bleach and ammonia, which produce a toxic gas.
- To clean windows: vinegar and water (two teaspoons per quart), squeegee off, dry with a soft cloth or newspaper.
- Club soda works well as a stain remover, as does a solution of water and vinegar ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup each).
- For spots: club soda for fruit juice, tea, gravy, ketchup, and mud; cold water immediately for blood; lemon juice for ink and perspiration; beaten egg whites for spots on leather.
- Polish furniture with one teaspoon lemon oil or almond oil dissolved in one pint of baby oil. Wash wood furniture with oil soap or Castile soap and water.

Shoe & Metal Polish

- Avoid shoe polishes containing trichloroethylene, methylene chloride, or nitrobenzene. Rub shoes with lemon juice and buff with a soft cloth instead.
- **Silver:** soak in one quart boiling water with one teaspoon baking soda or cream of tartar, one teaspoon salt, and a piece of aluminum foil. Polish with toothpaste and rinse.
- **Copper:** pour lemon juice or vinegar and salt over it and rub.
- **Brass:** half a teaspoon salt, half a cup white vinegar, and enough flour to make a paste. Let sit 25 minutes to 1 hour, wipe clean.
- **Aluminum:** soak in one quart boiling water with two teaspoons cream of tartar.

Natural Pest Control

- **Insect spray:** blend six cloves of crushed garlic, one minced onion, one tablespoon dried hot pepper, and one teaspoon pure soap in four quarts hot water. Let sit one to two days, then strain.
- **Roaches:** place bay leaves around cracks. Set out a dish of equal parts baking soda and powdered sugar, or oatmeal flour and plaster of Paris.
- **Ants:** pour a line of cream of tartar, red chili powder, paprika, or dried peppermint at the point of entry.
- **Fleas:** give pets brewer's yeast, garlic tablets, or vitamin B, and wash them regularly in herbal baths with fennel, rue, or rosemary.
- **Moths:** cedar chips, newspaper, and dried lavender are good substitutes for mothballs.

EPA studies indicate indoor air pollution is a more consistent threat to your health than outdoor pollution — mostly volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) like formaldehyde from new building materials, carpet, paneling, cabinets, and fabrics. NASA spent two decades researching plants that remove toxic chemicals from the air for use in space stations. The plants below were found particularly effective at clearing formaldehyde, benzene, and trichloroethylene.

Best for Clearing VOCs

- Mass cane (*Dracaena massangeana*)
- Pot mum (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*)
- Gerbera daisy (*Gerbera jamesonii*)
- Warneckii (*Dracaena deremensis* "Warneckii")
- Ficus (*Ficus benjamina*)
- Rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*)

Good for General Air Purification

- English ivy (*Hedera helix*)
- Marginata (*Dracaena marginata*)
- Mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria laurentii*)
- Peace lily (*Spathiphyllum* "Mauna Loa")
- Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema* "Silver Queen")
- Banana (*Musa oriana*)
- Bamboo palm (*Chamaedorea seifrizii*)
- Heart-leaf philodendron (*Philodendron oxycardium*)
- Green spider plant (*Chlorophytum elatum*)
- Janet Craig (*Dracaena deremensis*)

A Note on Children & Pets

Many of these plants are poisonous when taken internally. If you have children or pets, give special consideration to where you place them in your household.

Resources

- Environmental Protection Agency — [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov)
- Environmental Working Group — [EWG.org](https://www.ewg.org) (product and household ratings)
- Pearson, David. *The Natural House Book*. Fireside Publishers, 1989.