

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Easy Steps to Childproof your Home

Written by Brittany Harrison, CEC & FACS Extension Agent, Baldwin County



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Pet Safety at Home

Like children, pets explore the world around them. Many of the things you do to childproof your home will also help keep pets safe. Learn what plants can be toxic to pets and keep them out of your house or out of reach. Some pets can be tripping hazards, so be sure to watch where you are walking.

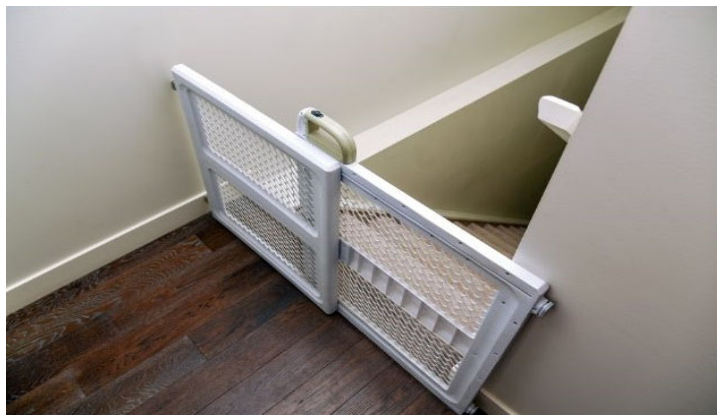


(Image Source: Pamela Turner)

Childproofing your home is important to keeping your children, and other children who visit your home, safe. Children don't always understand what is dangerous. It is important to identify potential hazards in the home to avoid accidents. Examine your home and look for ways to make it safer. Below you will find some tips to help make your home safer.

- Store household chemicals out of the reach of children, preferably in high spaces or locked cabinets
- Keep medications and other potentially hazardous pharmaceutical substances in a locked cabinet or somewhere inaccessible to children
- Insert safety outlet covers in electrical outlets
- Store electrical appliances and cords out of children's reach
- Cover radiators, hot water pipes, and fireplaces to avoid burns
- Use gates and locks to secure exits and stairways
- Be sure all knives, scissors, and other sharp instruments are out of reach
- Ensure that cords on blinds and drapes do not have loops that children can reach and do not hang down to children's eye level
- Make sure all toys are safe, clean, and in good repair
- Secure windows with safety catches or latches that children cannot open

Taking these actions can help to prevent burns, poisoning, falls, and other risks. Store the number for poison control on your phone and in a visible location in your home. The national number is 800-222-1222. For more safety tips use the UGA Extension publication [Childproofing Your Home](#).



(Image Source: Canva Pro)

Fight Mold: Improve Ventilation in Your Home

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, FACS Extension Agent, Chatham County

A well-ventilated home filters the air in the home and then circulates clean, fresh air, promoting better respiratory health in all areas of the home. Air circulation and ventilation affect the amount of inside moisture. When there is too much moisture this can contribute to mold growth. Below are 5 recommendations to improve indoor air circulation and ventilation.

1. Use ceiling fans and improve heating and cooling system vents.
2. Turn on exhaust fans when cooking in the kitchen and showering in the bathroom. Make sure the clothes dryer exhausts outside the home.
3. Avoid closing interior doors, including closets, unless there are return air grilles to allow air flow between spaces.
4. Install vents in the attic. Vents should be located at the part of the roof that overhangs the walls (soffit) to allow in cooler air and in the peak of the roof (ridge) to release warm air. Do not use powered attic vents since they may cause enough suction to pull conditioned air from the living space into the attic.
5. Check to see if your crawl space is vented. If so, the vents should be located near each corner, within the top 8 inches of the foundation (in a flood zone, vents also are needed within a foot off the ground).



(Image Source: pixabay.com)

In a poorly ventilated home, there is usually not a central heating and cooling system with ductwork or ceiling fans to provide complete air circulation to all areas in the home. Mold spores in the air act like seeds, causing mold to grow under the right conditions. Without knowing it, you can live a home that provides the perfect conditions for mold to grow. Mold spores need a food source, such as organic matter, moisture, warm temperatures and oxygen to thrive. Mold is easy to detect. Usually, a quick look with your eyes and smell of your nose can tell you if mold is present. A common sign of mold is visible mold growth, which can appear in a variety of textures and colors. A musty or earthy odor or finding visible water damage or discoloration in a specific area may be the signs that mold is present. There are many materials in our homes that provide food for mold, such as textiles, paper, furniture, or surfaces covered with organic matter like dirt.

One problem you may encounter is mold in your closets, where there is little to no air circulation. Mold may grow on shoes, clothes, and other belongings stored in the unconditioned space. Most closets in homes are not ventilated and do not have return air grilles to circulate air in and out of the area. Some closets have a solid door so when the door is closed there is no air flow which can hold in dampness or heat which are the perfect conditions for mold to grow. You can improve air circulation in the closet by replacing the solid door with a louver door or keep the closet door open. Good ventilation can also reduce your exposure to [Volatile Organic Compounds \(VOCs\)](#), allergens, mold, carbon monoxide, and other hazards throughout the house.

UGA Extension Resources:

[Mold and Moisture Inspection Checklist](#)

[Preventing Mold in Your Home](#)

[Removing Mold in Your Home](#)

More mold information: <https://site.extension.uga.edu/hie/>



(Image Source: Canva Pro)

It's Hurricane Season: Prepare Now

Written by Pamela R. Turner, Professor & Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist



(Image Source: Canva pro)

The 2023 Atlantic hurricane season starts June 1 and goes through November 30. The peak of the season is September, but that shouldn't stop you from preparing now. Even if you don't live near the coast, hurricanes can have major impacts inland, including flooding and tornadoes. This is a great time to create your emergency kit and develop plans for what to do if a hurricane is headed towards your home.

An emergency kit should be tailored to your household's needs. In general, you should have 1 gallon of water per person per day (minimum 3-day supply). In addition, you should have healthy foods; first aid kit; medications; clothing and bedding; personal care items; tools; important household and personal documents; and food and water for your pets.

Everyone needs to have an Emergency Plan and everyone in your home needs to be aware of it. The plan should include current phone numbers and local meeting location should you be separated. If you have a plan but have not updated it in the past 12 months, then it is time to do that.

For more detailed planning, UGA Extension created a [Home Emergency Preparedness Handbook](#) and a 2-page [Home Emergency Preparedness Checklist](#) to help you build your home emergency kit. You can contact your local Extension office for more information and to learn if they are offering programs to help you get prepared for home, farm and family emergencies.

[Emergency Management for ECE](#)

This free self-paced online module is designed to help Early Care and Education (ECE) facilities create and implement an emergency action for a variety of emergency situations. You will also learn about recovering from an emergency and how to talk with young children after emergencies. (Created by UGA Extension.)



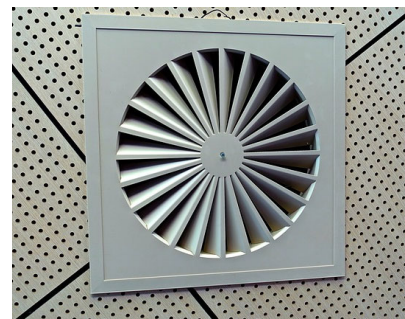
June is National Healthy Homes Month

Fight Mold: Control Indoor Humidity

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, FACS Extension Agent, Chatham County

Indoor relative humidity (RH) above 60% can contribute to mold growth. Household activities like bathing, cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and doing dishes can raise the humidity level inside your home. High indoor humidity encourages not only mold growth, but also pests. You should aim to keep the indoor RH between 30 and 50 percent. Below are some suggestions for things you can do to reduce indoor humidity.

- Decrease bathing time or reduce the water temperature.
- Turn on exhaust fans when cooking or bathing.
- Wash only full laundry and dishwasher loads.
- Vent appliances like the dryer and range hood to the outdoors.
- Open windows for increased air circulation (only when the relative humidity level outdoors is below 50%).
- If you use a dehumidifier, make sure you clean it regularly.
- Use a well maintained, right-sized air conditioner on the “auto fan” setting (using the constant fan setting will return moisture to the home).



(Image Source: pixabay.com)

Preventing mold growth in the home is easier than removing mold and protects personal health while living in a healthier home.

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Dress your child appropriately for the playground. Avoid necklaces, scarves, purses, and other items that could get caught on playground equipment. Use long sleeves to protect from sunburn, and use layers that can be removed as your child gets warmer.

Clean the blender with warm water and a drop of dish soap. Turn it on and let it run for a few seconds, then rinse.

Cover your stroller wheels with shower curtains when you bring the stroller inside to reduce the amount of dirt you bring into your home.

Keep children safe while you're grilling out by setting up child gates around the grill.



Co-editors:

Dr. Pamela R. Turner, Housing and Indoor Environment Extension Specialist
Dr. Diane W. Bales, Human Development Extension Specialist

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