

# Healthy Indoor Environments

*Where We Live, Learn and Play*

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## Lead Poisoning Risks at Home

*Written by Jackie E. Ogden, CFCS, Chatham County Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent*



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### Inside this issue:

- Lead poisoning risks at home
- Tips for safely storing cleaning products
- Tips to stay safe at Halloween
- Removing stains from fabric
- Healthy Home Hacks

Lead poisoning is preventable in your home. Lead is a chemical element that can be found in soil, rocks, and water. It has properties that render it an attractive additive to a variety of products such as paint, where it enhances color and resists corrosion. As an additive to plastics and vinyl it provides rigidity and sturdiness. Unfortunately, lead is toxic to both humans and animals.

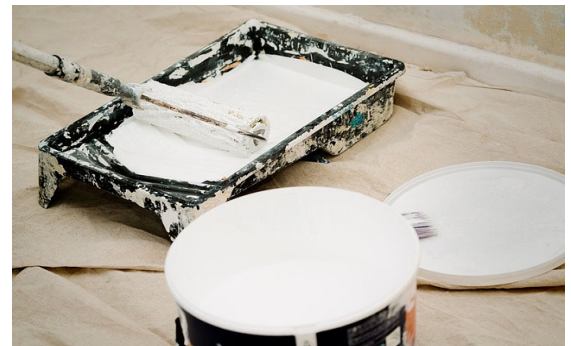
For decades lead was added to paint to increase durability, accelerate dry time and resist moisture. Lead-based paint was used in both interiors and exteriors of homes. In 1978 the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development successfully banned lead from house paint. However, homes built before 1978, and marine and bridge paints may still contain lead to promote durability.

Intact, undamaged lead-based paint may not be problematic; however, when the paint begins to deteriorate, it may flake, chip, or degrade to a fine dust. Lead dust is invisible and easily dispersed into the air. Airborne, inhaled lead dust can cause lead poisoning.

Lead poisoning is the number one environmental threat to America's infants and children who spend up to 90 percent of their time at home. Children, age six and under, are particularly susceptible to the effects of lead poisoning in the home or places where they spend most of their time. The biggest danger associated with lead poisoning in children is neurological in nature, if exposed to lead in early childhood.

Many property owners have repainted surfaces that were originally covered with lead-based paint. If this repainting occurred when the original paint was in good condition, the lead-based paint is encased underneath the new lead-free paint.

Another potential source of lead poisoning are consumer goods. Most products made in America are lead free; however, this isn't true for products manufactured in other countries. Consumers should be cautious when purchasing new and used imported products. Be aware of the facts about lead and keep your home safe for your family.



(Image Source: pixabay)

## Tips for Safely Storing Cleaning Products

Written by Teresa Adkins, Decatur County 4-H/Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

Purples, pinks, yellows, blues and oranges. Beautiful colors that invite curiosity in children. In fact, many are the same color as juice drinks. However, these lovely colored cleaning solutions can become a health safety hazard if not stored properly.



(Image Source: pixabay)

Cleaning products are a necessity for every home but when stored incorrectly they can be a danger to children and pets. Since most cleaning products contain chemicals that have the possibility to cause harm to people, pets and even household materials, caution must be used.

Here are some ways to store cleaning products to help keep everyone safe.

- Always store cleaning materials where children and pets cannot reach them. This means do not store products in cabinets under the sink in bathrooms and/or kitchens.
- It is best to put cleaning products on a high shelf in a storage closet that has a tightly closing door. The closed door helps stop climbing pets from getting into cleaning product containers and/or knocking them over. Remember to securely close the lids on the cleaners to prevent harmful fumes from escaping into your home.
- Place cleaning products away from food items or food contact surfaces like plates, utensils, linens, etc. Leaking or spilled cleaning solutions could contaminate the food/surfaces and cause accidental poisoning.
- It is best not to take labels off cleaning products because the label contains safety warnings and instructions. Also, make sure that the label is not damaged and is easy to read.

• Never store cleaning products in food or drink containers or in containers that once held chemicals. Some products can easily be confused with beverages and young children or pets might drink them.

Consider making your own green cleaning products using household items that are both safe and inexpensive. UGA Extension has information on green cleaning with recipes and helpful information on keeping a clean home at <https://site.extension.uga.edu/hie/green-cleaning/>.

## Tips to Stay Safe at Halloween

Written by Diane W. Bales, Extension Human Development Specialist

Halloween is a favorite holiday of many children. The chance to dress up, spend time with friends, and eat candy is hard to resist. Halloween also brings some specific risks and dangers. But with careful planning, you can ensure that your children have a safe and enjoyable Halloween celebration.

### Decorating Pumpkins

If you are planning to carve pumpkins with your children, be sure to use the safest tools. For young children, decorating pumpkins with paint, stickers, and other materials may be safer than carving. If you really want to carve a pumpkin, have the adult use the knife to carve a design the children created. If you really want your children to have the experience of carving, check out kid-friendly carving tools (available online and at most big-box stores before Halloween), and teach your child to use them with caution.

Once the pumpkin is carved, use caution lighting it. Battery-operated candles or small flashlights are safer than candles with flames. If you do light a candle, be sure the pumpkin is sitting on a flat surface away from children. Keep the top off the pumpkin while the candle is lit to avoid scorching the inside of the pumpkin.

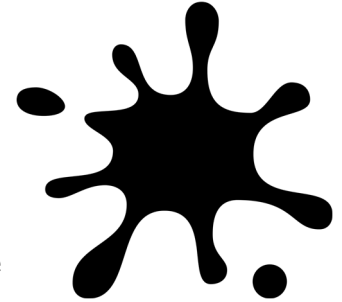


## Removing Stains from Fabric

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

Stained and torn clothing accounts for tons of trash and unusable donations. The best thing you can do is to remove stains and make repairs to your clothing. Below are some stain removal tips from the American Cleaning Institute.

- Remove stains quickly. Fibers are absorbent and can hold onto the stain if left unattended.
- If you can't wash the item immediately, gently rub regular salt into the stain. The salt helps to absorb the wetness. Be sure to wash the item as soon as possible.
- On-the-go stain removers are good but use caution since they can damage delicate fabrics.
- Pretreat with a stain remover before washing. Select an enzyme that works best on that type of stain.
  - \* Amylases work on starchy stains like pasta
  - \* Cellulases work on dirt stains
  - \* Lipases help with oil and fat-based stains
  - \* Proteases remove protein stains like grass or bodily fluids



*(Image Source: pixabay)*

Washing clothing in cold water is generally the best option for most stains. If it's a tough stain, add extra detergent when washing. Be sure all stains are gone before placing clothing in the dryer.

Below are some home-based removers you can use to remove stains.

- White wine vinegar can be effective on stains from coffee, blood, wine, and sticky residues. Dilute it with water before soaking the stained garment in the solution.
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Baking soda



*(Image Source: pixabay)*



## Tips to Stay Safe at Halloween (continued from p. 3)

### Costume Safety

Costumes are a favorite part of Halloween. Here are some tips to keep your child's costume safer:

- Check costume length, and shorten bottoms if needed to reduce the risk of tripping
- Choose face paint over masks whenever possible so children can see better in their costume
- If children will be outdoors, add reflective tape or stickers to costumes to increase visibility
- Choose light colors whenever possible to make children more visible outdoors

### Safe Trick-or-Treating

In many communities, trick-or-treating is a highlight of Halloween. Many communities also offer alternative events, like Safe Trick or Treating or Trunk-or-Treat events, as alternatives to going house to house. If you and your children do decide to go the traditional trick-or-treating route, consider these tips to stay safe:

- Accompany children under 12 while they are out trick-or-treating
- Teach children to approach houses only if the front light is on
- Remind children to follow safe walking tips – stick to sidewalks, walk facing traffic, cross the street at corners and crosswalks, make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them, and watch for cars that are turning or backing up
- Have children put down phones and other electronic devices, and remove headphones or air pods while trick-or-treating
- Check all candy and other items received before children eat anything. Throw away any food that is not in a factory-sealed package

With planning and caution, Halloween can be a fun celebration for children and adults alike.

## Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist

~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

**Be sure to wash your reusable grocery bags regularly** to remove bacteria and prevent contamination of foods. If the bags are made of fabric that cannot be washed, wipe them down with cleaning wipes.

**Use an old sock** to clean window blinds and overhead fan blades.

**Fill the space next to your dryer** with a pool noodle or foam pipe insulation to keep socks and other small items from falling into the cracks.

**Brace a wobbly table leg** by gluing a wine cork to it.

**Keep your silverware organizer from sliding around** in the drawer by sliding a pool noodle behind it or putting a small piece of nonskid rug pad underneath it.



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