

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Georgia Healthy Housing
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Let's Evacuate: Tips on Managing Home Emergencies

Written by Brittany Harrison, Baldwin County Extension Coordinator and Family & Consumer Sciences and 4-H Agent

When the worst happens, having a prepared house evacuation plan can save you from missing out on safety and ending up in tragedy. A solid plan makes sure all household members know what to do when fire, flooding or other disaster strikes.

So, your home evacuation plan should have marked escape routes. To ensure that each person can exit safely, every room should include at least two potential exits. Make sure the windows and doors are easily accessible and not blocked. It's also necessary to have a specific meeting spot outside the house. This should be a secure area where everyone can come together and be counted after evacuating, like a mailbox or even a neighbor's home.

Having a list of emergency contacts, including family members and emergency services phone numbers, is essential.

Everyone should be familiar with the plan for evacuation, and so practicing drills at least two times per year is essential. This also means your family can experience simulations of various emergencies, from fires to severe weather, which teaches your family how to make practical and safe decisions with real-world implications.

Get an emergency kit together now and place it in an accessible location. Your emergency kit needs to have bottled water, non-perishable food, flashlights, extra batteries, first-aid supplies, prescription meds and important documents.

Preparing families for the future requires ongoing planning with practice, so they are ready to respond to emergencies when they occur, thus increasing their safety and reducing their risk.



Image source: Publisher

Travel Tips to Reduce the Risk of Bringing Bed Bugs Home

Written by Jackie E. Ogden, CFCS, Chatham County Family & Consumer Sciences



Image source: Canva Pro

You may have heard about bed bug infestations in hotels, or have had a bed bug issue in your own home. In recent years, bed bug populations have increased dramatically, and they do not discriminate! Bed bugs are excellent hitchhikers and can easily get into your home. An adult bed bug is reddish-brown and about the size of an apple seed. They are wingless, do not jump, are nocturnal and use their legs to dash across surfaces. During the day they gather in cracks and crevices. At night they are attracted to warm bodies that are stationary like sleeping humans and pets. Bed bugs don't transmit diseases to humans, but they do bite, and the bites cause itchiness, skin infections, inflammation, stress, anxiety, and sleeplessness.

Here are some tips to prevent bringing bed bugs home from your travels.

- ♦ Start by learning more about bed bugs. Read the University of Georgia publication [Don't let the bed bugs bite](#).
- ♦ Bed bugs may hide in your luggage, so avoid putting your luggage on the hotel bed or floor. Instead, place your luggage on a luggage rack away from the wall after examining the rack for bed bugs.
- ♦ Inspect the mattress and bedding. Bed bugs hide in tiny holes, cracks and along seams. Look for evidence of dark spots (bed excrement) on fabrics and sheets. Check behind the bed headboard, on bed linens and furniture.
- ♦ For short hotel stays, leave your clothes in your luggage, and keep the bags closed when not in use.
- ♦ Unpack clothes and shake them out in a bathtub or shower. Wash clothes immediately. If you suspect bed bugs wash in hot water and dry on the highest setting for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean or steam clean items that cannot be washed.

Before you travel, take a few minutes to view this helpful [video](#) by Dr. Dini Miller, a professor at Virginia Tech.



Image source: Canva Pro



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Managing Mold in the Summertime

Written by Stephanie R. Benton, Early County Extension Coordinator and Family & Consumer Sciences

Summer is about enjoying longer days and the outdoors during the warm weather months. But sometimes the temperatures and moisture levels exceed your comfort level and encourage mold growth inside your home. Mold has negative impacts inside your home, as well as to your health.

Mold thrives under the right conditions - moisture, warm temperatures and oxygen. When you reduce or eliminate these sources, mold becomes non-existent; however, that isn't practical, especially in Georgia. As we move closer to start of summer, here are some tips to help in the prevention of mold in your home.

Perform routine household maintenance

- ♦ Check for leaks or water damage throughout your home, including the attic and crawlspace. Also check the plumbing.
- ♦ Seal leaks around windows and doors to prevent moisture from entering.
- ♦ Have the HVAC system inspected to ensure that is operating efficiently.
- ♦ Change air filters regularly.

Eliminate sources of moisture

- ♦ Use the exhaust fans to reduce moisture in the bathroom or in the kitchen.
- ♦ Clean out the gutters.
- ♦ Ensure that the water drains away from the foundation. There should be a 5% grade on all sides of your home.

Control humidity

- ♦ Using the air conditioner to keep humidity under 60%, preferably between 30%-50%.
- ♦ Using a dehumidifier when needed.
- ♦ Don't block, or close off vents.

Encourage good ventilation

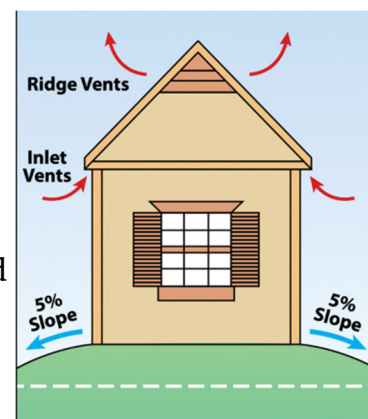
- ♦ Use a ceiling fan to improve air circulation.
- ♦ Avoid closing doors, especially closet doors.

Keep your home clean and decluttered

- ♦ Regular cleaning helps you stay on top of potential mold problems
- ♦ Decluttering makes for easier cleaning and allows air to circulate more freely. This is especially true in closets and small rooms.

Mold can make summertime not so enjoyable if it affects your home and health. But, with the right attention prior to the onset of hotter temperatures to control humidity and moisture, you will be ready for summer. Learn more about controlling mold in the UGA Extension publication—

[Preventing Mold in your Home.](#)



(Image Source: UGA Extension)



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Keeping Children Safe in the Sun This Summer

Written by Diane Bales, Extension Human Development Specialist

Summer is a time for fun outdoor activities—and because children spend so much time outdoors, it's also a time when the risk of sunburns is high. Although using sunscreen is important all year long, choosing and using a good sunscreen is essential during the summer months. Here are tips to help keep kids safe in the sun.

Dress Appropriately for the Sun

- Keep babies under 6 months old out of direct sunlight
- Dress children cool, lightweight, light-colored clothes that cover the body
- Stay out of the sun between 10 am and 2 pm, when the sun's rays are strongest
- Have children wear a hat with a 3-inch brim to protect your face and neck from the sun
- Choose sunglasses with at least 99% UV protection for everyone in the family, and be sure they wear them



(Image Source: pixabay)

Choose the Right Sunscreen

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to 30
- Avoid sunscreens with oxybenzone, because of concerns about hormonal properties
- For the face, tops of ears, and shoulders, choose a sunscreen with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide to reduce the risk of irritation

Healthy Home Hacks

~ Pamela Turner, UGA Extension Housing and Indoor Environment Specialist
~ Diane Bales, UGA Extension Human Development Specialist

Don't make your bed! Researchers say to let your bed breathe for an hour or so before making it. This helps reduce moisture and dust mites, which are common allergens.

Wash reusable grocery bags regularly to prevent potential cross contamination.

Close the toilet lid before flushing. Water from the toilet can splash over 6 feet! Keep those germs away from you and your toothbrush.

Chew-proof electrical cords by wrapping an old coil telephone cord around the electrical cord. It helps to deter pets from chewing on the cord and provides a way to use old phone cords.



UGA Extension [Healthy Indoor Environments](https://healthyhomes.uga.edu)
(healthyhomes.uga.edu)



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