< Indoor Air Pollutants and Health

# Carpets

## How can carpet impact health?

Carpets may trap pollutants like dust mites, pet dander, cockroach allergens, particle pollution, lead, mold spores, pesticides, dirt and dust. Toxic gases in the air can stick to small particles that settle into carpets.[1] These pollutants may become airborne during renovations, vacuuming or even daily activities like walking on the carpet. In the home, children are more likely to be exposed to pollution in carpets. They spend time playing on the floor and place their hands in their mouths. If a large area is covered in carpet, it may be very difficult to remove indoor air pollutants and allergens.[2]

Chemicals used in some new carpets, carpet pads and the adhesives used to install them can harm your health. Some of these chemicals and glues are made with volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which emit odors and pollutants. New carpet installation also has been associated with wheezing and coughing in babies in their first year of life.[3]

## How can you protect your health?

Instead of carpets, chose hard-surfaced flooring and rugs that can be removed and cleaned outside. If this is not possible, vacuum at least three times a week with a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter.[2] However, vacuuming may disturb settled particles, causing more pollution to become airborne. Deep clean carpets annually using dry steam cleaning. Make sure carpets are properly dried to reduce the potential for mildew.

Kitchens, bathrooms and entryways should always be carpet free because they are frequently damp, providing a good environment for mold. Use durable mats outside entryways to limit dirt entering the home and provide space for people to put their shoes near the door.

As with any building product, if purchasing new carpet, choose a carpet that releases fewer VOC emissions. Request that the carpet is unrolled and aired out in a well-ventilated area (a clean, dry warehouse, for example) for 72 hours before installation. If possible, have carpet installed while the space is unoccupied. Request the use of glues or adhesives that are non-toxic and low VOC. Then allow 72 hours of ventilation before inhabiting the space. Make sure the carpet can be removed later without use of toxic chemicals.[1]

## References


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