

THE PRINCIPLES OF A HEALTHY HOME

Housing conditions can and should support good health. But what makes a healthy home environment? Since the 1930s, public health and housing stakeholders have offered guidance on fundamental housing characteristics as they relate to health. Today, NCHH supports the following 10 principles as a framework for describing the critical components of a healthy home. Healthy homes are:

DRY



Damp houses provide a nurturing environment for mites, roaches, rodents, and molds, all of which are associated with asthma.

CLEAN



Clean homes help reduce pest infestations and exposure to contaminants.

PEST-FREE



Exposure to mice and cockroaches increase asthma episodes in children. Inappropriate treatment for pest infestations can exacerbate health problems as pesticide residues pose risks for neurological damage and cancer.

VENTILATED



Increasing the fresh air supply improves respiratory health.

SAFE



Falls are the most frequent cause of residential injuries to older adults and children, followed by injuries from objects in the home, burns, and poisonings.

CONTAMINANT-FREE



Chemical exposures include lead, radon, pesticides, volatile organic compounds, PFAS, and environmental tobacco smoke. Many of these exposures are far higher indoors than outside.

MAINTAINED



Poorly maintained homes are at risk for moisture and pest problems. Deteriorated lead-based paint in older housing is the primary cause of lead poisoning.

THERMALLY CONTROLLED



Prolonged exposure to excessive heat or cold when homes do not maintain adequate temperatures put residents at risk for various health problems.

ACCESSIBLE



Increased accessibility in and outside the home can help reduce trips, falls, and isolation, and improve mental health and physical activity.

AFFORDABLE



High housing cost burdens can lead to housing instability, with frequent moves, overcrowding, and homelessness. High housing costs can force families into substandard housing, and contribute to damaged credit, job loss, lack of nutritious food and adequate healthcare, and poor mental health.