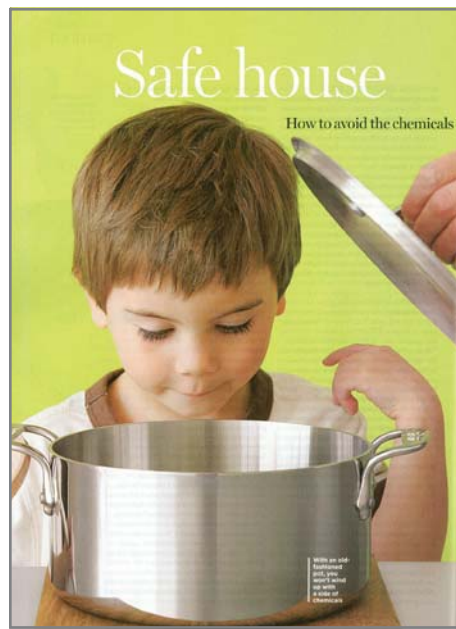


# PR HIGHLIGHT

## PARENTING MAGAZINE

### SAFE HOUSE: HOW TO AVOID THE CHEMICALS THAT COULD HURT YOUR KIDS—INSIDE YOUR HOME AND OUT



that could hurt your kids—inside your home and out

**“Toxic coolware?” “Lead in toys!” “Indoor air pollution!”** Headlines like these can be crazy-making, but there’s no need to panic, say experts, or to pack your family off to an igloo. But you do want to be aware of what chemicals are in your household goods—especially if you have little kids, whose bodies are particularly vulnerable to the effects of hazardous chemicals.

It’s tempting to assume that a product isn’t toxic if it’s for sale at your favorite stores, but that’s not necessarily true. Companies don’t have to prove products are safe. What’s more, “many government agencies get involved only after there’s a known hazard,” says Jerome Paulson, M.D., associate professor of pediatrics and public health at George Washington University in Washington, DC. To help you sort out what you should be concerned about, here’s a guide to the potentially harmful substances found in homes and what you can do about them. Even if you can make only a change or two, you’ll sleep much better knowing your home is a safer place for your family.

**In the kitchen**

**POTENTIAL DANGER:** **NONSTICK COOKWARE**  
**The danger:** Pans that get scratched off easily and make cleanup a cinch contain perfluorochemicals (or PFCs), which have been shown to cause cancer, hormone disruption, and hypothyroidism in animals. In humans, they’ve been linked to a decreased ability to fight infection, as well as low birth weight in babies whose mothers were exposed to these during pregnancy. PFCs are found in the linings of fast-food packaging and microwave-popover bags to keep grease from soaking through. As well as in some furniture and carpeting. Healthy-home fans H<sub>2</sub>O just clear a better home are at risk from day-to-day exposures, but environmental-health experts recommend these common-sense precautions:

- **Turn down the heat!** Don’t preheat an empty pan. Use medium or low heat while cooking. It’s when

nonstick pans get too hot that they emit potentially dangerous fumes,” says pediatrician Alan Greene, M.D., author of *Raising Baby Green*.

- **Replace flaking, peeling pans** when they start to go. Look for solid-faceted stainless steel or cast iron, or try one of the new PFC-free nonstick pans on the market. (See the best ones at [Parenting.com/greenpage](http://Parenting.com/greenpage).)
- **Take your label off** the cooktop, and serve it on plates.
- **Pop popcorn on the stove**, or use an air popper.

**POTENTIAL DANGER:** **POLLUTANTS IN LAP WATER**  
**The danger:** Here’s something you can worry less about: “The water is more regulated than bottled water,” says Dr. Paulson. However, it can vary greatly from region to region. An analysis of tap-water data from 19 cities by the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), for instance, revealed elevated levels of lead, arsenic, and other hazardous chemicals.

**Healthy-home tips:** • **Find out what’s in your water.** Your community water department is required by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regularly review the makeup of local water supplies and to publish those results. If you don’t get a

By Celeste Perron Photographs by Halle Burton

“Test your own H<sub>2</sub>O with a simple kit from Everpure. After sending in a sample of your water, you’ll receive detailed results, plus the best ways to filter out any impurities that the test turned up.”

**Safe house**

report in the mail once or twice a year, call and ask for one. For a guide to understanding water-safety facts and figures, go to [safe-drinking-water.org](http://safe-drinking-water.org).

- **Test your own H<sub>2</sub>O** with a simple kit from Everpure (EPA-approved).

After sending in a sample of your water, you’ll receive detailed results, plus the best ways to filter out any impurities that the test turned up.

- **And then, use a filter.** “Many contaminants can be removed with a simple activated carbon can,” says Anne Neumann, director of The Water Center at the University of Washington, in Seattle. These are the relatively inexpensive filters that attach at the faucet or below the sink.

However, there are some water contaminants (perchlorate, a by-product of rocket fuel, for example) that may require a reverse-osmosis filter. These under-sink units are expensive and waste some water in order to clean it, but they may be worth it if you live in an area with heavily contaminated H<sub>2</sub>O. Whatever type of filter you choose, look for one labeled as meeting NSF/ANSI Standard 181, which means that the manufacturer’s claims have been verified. You can find a more detailed explanation of water-filter options at [waterfilter.computer.com](http://waterfilter.computer.com).

**In the family room and bedrooms**

**POTENTIAL DANGER:** **CHEMICAL FLAME RETARDANTS IN DECIDING AND FURNITURE**  
**The danger:** Most household products contain chemicals called PBDEs, which slow the rate at which something burns. The problem is, PBDEs have been shown to interfere with a child’s developing neural system, causing problems with memory and attention. What’s more, they have widely contaminated the environment and even our bodies. Although there’s still a scarcity of data regarding the danger to humans, several states are concerned enough to have banned the production and sale of certain PBDEs.

**Healthy-home tips:** • **Keep your home as dust-free as possible.** “It’s not easy for a busy family,” PERON like to attach to dust particles,” says Frank Johnson, M.D., a science fellow at the NRDC in San Francisco. “And kids are especially likely to be exposed because they spend so much time on the floor and put things in their mouths.” (See “A Fast, Healthy Move,” opposite, for tips on controlling dust and indoor air pollution.)

- **Make small changes now.** No need to check off the flame-retardant items in your house, but do consider replacing some. “Start with your children’s bedrooms, since kids spend so much time in there and their faces are close to their bedding all night,” says Dr. Greene. “When you buy new bedding, switch to the organic-cotton line. Organic fibers are never treated with PBDEs, so getting for organic sheets and pillowcases is one way to make sure you avoid them. If you’re ready to replace mattresses (including cribs

alternates), consider looking for ones that meet flame-retardant standards without using chemicals. Also, use old “egg crates” from mattress pads, since they’re coated with flame retardants. A list of companies that make PBDE-free mattresses and bedding can be found at [eng.org/pbdefree](http://eng.org/pbdefree).

- **Make bigger changes later.** When it comes time to buy new furniture, many experts feel it’s worth a little extra effort to find PBDE-free options. Most products aren’t labeled as such, so you’ll have to ask questions at the store (or even call the manufacturer) to find out whether or not an item contains PBDEs. As a general rule, pieces made of natural fibers such as cotton, wool, and hemp don’t catch fire easily or burn quickly, and so are less likely to be treated. (See how stopped using PBDEs in its products, other furniture manufacturers are relying on it to the extent allowed by retailers. For more information, go to [theactionproduction.org/sub/short.php](http://theactionproduction.org/sub/short.php).)

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**PRODUCT**  
Everpure Water Analysis Kit

**CIRCULATION**  
More than 2.2 million

**PROFILE**  
Written for parents of children ages 0-12 as a source of general and in-depth information. Content focuses on the raising of children, education, health, nutrition, child development, discipline and activities.