



CONTENTS

Safe At Home	1
Nothing To Cough At	1
Cut It Out	2

QUICK LINKS

[Safe and Healthy Homes Program](#)

[Mold in Your Home](#)

[Facts about Lead Poisoning](#)

[EPA's Lead in your home, a Parent's Reference Guide](#)

[Tobacco Free Allegheny](#)

[The PA Free Quitline](#)



Safe At Home

The *Safe at Home* newsletter is produced by the Safe and Healthy Homes Program of the Allegheny County Health Department. Quarterly we will be addressing relevant and timely home health and safety issues pertinent to our community partners and the populations they serve. Feel free to print and distribute any information from our newsletter that is relevant to your staff and clients.

Please let us know if there are any particular issues that may be of interest, and we will do our best to accommodate these requests.

We look forward to working with you and your families to make their homes safer and healthier. As always, we encourage you to refer any families that may desire to learn more about their home and the hazards which exist.



Don't Let Your Child's Health Go Up In Smoke

We all know smoking is an unhealthy bad habit. But do you really know the effects, especially on children? Vulnerable populations are disproportionately affected by tobacco smoke, but children in particular seem to be the most susceptible.

The rapidly growing body of a child proportionally takes in more food, water, and air than an adult and absorbs chemicals easier while detoxifying slower. One study shows that children in Pennsylvania are particularly at risk, in fact they are 12 times more likely to be exposed to environmental tobacco smoke than children in Utah. According to the CDC article "Cigarette Smoking and Tobacco Use Among People of Low Socioeconomic Status", those with low socioeconomic status have higher rates of smoking, more exposure to secondhand smoke, and less access to health care. Childhood health problems resulting from exposure to smoke include preterm birth, low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), more frequent and severe asthma attacks, high blood pressure, ear infections, and other respiratory infections.



In addition to secondhand smoke, thirdhand smoke is becoming part of the conversation. According to Cancer Treatment Centers of America, thirdhand smoke is “the potentially cancer-causing compounds that form when tobacco smoke particles mix with gases in the air, absorbing into nearby surfaces, like carpets, rugs, clothes, bedsheets, wall paint, car dashboards, and even toys.” The risks are in touching, swallowing, or inhaling substances contaminated with thirdhand smoke. Children are particularly at risk due to their mouthing behaviors and proximity to contaminated surfaces. Research shows that smokers that do not smoke in their car or home still have nicotine residues in those environments. One reason for this is that most people do not realize they are still breathing out smoke for about 2 minutes after their last puff and carrying a lot of contaminants on their person.

Ultimately, the best thing for you and your family is to be completely smoke-free!

For more information and resources for going smoke-free check out these links:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/tobacco/Pages/Dangers-of-Secondhand-Smoke.aspx>.

pa.quitlogix.org

1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669)

1-855-DEJELO-YA (335-3569)

Summer Lawn and Garden Safety

Summertime is finally here and that means more time spent outdoors in our yards. While yard maintenance tasks may seem routine, it is still very important to keep safety in mind to prevent accidents and injuries such as cuts, burns, electrocutions, fires, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), from 2012 to 2014, an average of 36,000 people were treated in hospital emergency rooms for walk-behind power mower injuries. These injuries often result from hand or foot contact with the mower’s rotating blade and sometimes require emergency surgery.

Newer products are required to have safety features designed to prevent injury such as blade brake control, foot shields, and warning labels. Sometimes these safety features can fail or malfunction, so it is important to use caution with lawn mowers and other types of lawn and garden tools.



Below are some suggestions for safe use of lawn and garden equipment. When in doubt, refer to the owner's manual for information on safety, product usage, routine maintenance, and troubleshooting.

- Wear proper protective equipment such as gloves, safety glasses, and ear plugs.
- Make sure tools are stored properly and out of reach of children.
- Never allow young children on or near a lawn mower or power tool, especially while it is in use.
- Do not leave tools, electrical cords, or garden hoses lying on walkways or stairs where they could be tripped over.
- Wear sturdy, slip resistant, close toed shoes. Never wear sandals or shoes with laces that may get caught in sharp blades.
- Fill the fuel tank before starting the engine. Never refuel a product while it is running or while it is still hot.
- Check the lawn for debris beforehand to prevent items such as rocks or toys from coming in contact with sharp blades and injuring someone.
- Allow the engine to cool down before storing power tools in a shed.
- Never run a gas-powered mower or tool indoors or inside a storage shed.
- Always push the mower forward, never pull it backward. If your lawn has a slope to it, always mow across the slope with the push mower, not up and down.
- Make sure that the mower is off, cooled down, and the blade is not moving when you are clearing jammed clippings or adjusting the cutting height.
- Never leave the mower or power tool running unattended. Always turn off the mower or power tool if you leave the operator position for any reason.
- For electric plug-in tools, organize your work so that you start with the area nearest to the electrical outlet and gradually move further away. This will minimize running over and damaging the cord which could cause electrocution.
- If using electric plug-in tools outdoors or near water, make sure the outlet is equipped with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI)

For more information, please check out the following websites:

<https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fspublic/5126%20Walk%20Behind%20Power%20Mower%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/family/gardening/index.htm>



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