

Bust dust to toxin-proofing children

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Bust the dust -- that's one of five key tips featured in the first national brochure on protecting children from toxic substances, produced with input from a Simon Fraser University health sciences professor.

Bruce Lanphear, an expert on [children's](#) environmental health, is an advisor to the Ontario-based Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE). The organization brings together 11 collaborators to address environmental health issues affecting children.

At the top of the list is bust that [dust](#) through frequent vacuuming or wet mopping, and dusting with a damp-cloth.

“House dust is a major source of children's exposures to toxic substances including lead which, even at very low levels, is known to be harmful to the developing brain,” says Lanphear.

“The developing brain of a fetus or young child is particularly susceptible to the neurotoxic effects of lead, mercury and other toxic chemicals. An infant will absorb about 50 per cent of ingested lead, whereas an adult absorbs about 10 per cent.”

Lanphear notes that this, in combination with children's frequent hand-to-mouth behaviour, puts them at great risk for developing toxin-related illnesses and behavioural disorders.

The CPCHE's four other top tips to help especially expectant and new parents safeguard their children from [environmental health](#) risks are:

- Choose natural products as cleaners rather than chemical-based ones such as air fresheners.
- Pregnant women and children should stay away from areas under renovation to avoid exposure to toxin-laden dust from products such as paints, caulking and glues.
- Don't use plastic containers or wraps in the microwave. Heated chemicals can migrate into the food or beverage. Eat fresh or frozen foods rather than those in cans with a Bisphenol-A (BPA) laced lining. BPA has been linked to the disruption of brain development and endocrine function.
- Eat fish that is low in the metal mercury, such as Atlantic mackerel, herring and rainbow trout, rather than tuna. Mercury is toxic to the brain.

The CPCHE's new brochure will appear as an insert in the July issue of *Today's Parent* magazine, which was mailed out to subscribers in early June. On June 20th the same issue will appear on newsstands in Ontario.

Provided by Simon Fraser University

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