Are you thinking of repainting, replacing the bathroom vanity, or pulling out that old kitchen linoleum?

Stop!

DIY home improvement projects are as tempting as they are time consuming. They're also potentially unsafe. The very technologies and materials that make them possible for homeowners to do themselves in the first place can also fill a home with unwanted hazards. This is why it’s critical to take the time to identify the potential dangers and know where they hide before you start working. Doing this first will make eco-friendly and healthy home improvement a simple matter of choosing the best alternatives and technologies.

Let’s get started with some Easy Steps!

Healthy Child has been a trusted resource for parents and caregivers for more than 23 years. Our mission is to empower parents to take action and protect their children from harmful chemicals. We were founded in 1992 by Jim and Nancy Chuda, after they lost their 5-year-old daughter Colette to cancer linked to pesticide exposure. Learn more at HealthyChild.org
TEARING IT DOWN

You've chosen your project and worked out your budget. You've done your research. Things are about to get messier before they get better. The mess may contain substances that aren't safe for you and your children's health.

- Know your home's secrets. When was it built? If necessary based on its age, test for lead and asbestos.
- Seal the room before you begin your project so you and your family aren't breathing toxic dust.
- Before you start knocking into walls, find out where the water, gas, and electrical lines lie.

HIDDEN HAZARDS

Once you start poking into walls and peering under floors you never know what you'll find. You may or may not uncover problematic challenges.

- We've said it before and we'll say it again, if your house was built before 1978, chances are high it contains lead paint. Stop poking around and call an expert!
- Got water coming in where it shouldn't be? See signs of mold? Stop the source of water and clean it up! If the affected area is greater than 10 sq. feet, seek professional help.
- Want to replace that old kitchen floor? Asbestos, a carcinogenic mineral linked to lung disease including cancer, lurks all over homes—including in vinyl flooring. So test for it before you start ripping things up.

SAFER BUILDING MATERIALS

No matter what your project entails, it's going to mean a trip to a building supply store, where you'll encounter a bewildering array of materials, products, and technologies all claiming to be the best for their purpose. Newsflash! Many of these are hazardous to your health. To get the safest versions on the market:

- Do your research on eco- and human-friendly paints, sealants, glues, wallboard, and more before you head to the store.
- Develop a serious label habit. Read labels completely, consider all warnings, and follow the instructions.
- Know your seals and certifications. The most trustworthy certifications are third party. Look for them as you shop.

POST PROJECT CLEANUP

You've planned and plotted, demolished and deconstructed, and rebuilt and remodeled. Now comes the most crucial part of the entire project: the cleanup.

- Make sure you're really done before you start cleaning from top to bottom and in every nook and cranny—or you'll have to clean twice.
- Only use cleaners that are natural and biodegradable, not made of petrochemicals.
- Make sure your vacuum has a HEPA filter.
- If your project disturbed lead paint or asbestos, it will require a very specific kind of cleaning. You may need to hire a professional to tidy things up post construction.

For more tips, check out our FREE e-book, “Easy Steps to Healthy Home Improvement” at HealthyChild.org/resource-center