

# Perfumes, Fragrances, and Chemicals of Concern in Household Items

**Here are some tips to improve the indoor air quality in your home.**

1. Keep house plants that are known to provide excellent oxygen exchange and absorb toxins like formaldehyde.
  - For a list of house plants, see “Plants for Clean Air” in the tool kit.
2. Open windows for proper air exchange and ventilation.
3. Use activated charcoal to absorb smells, toxins, and odors. These so-called carbon catchers act like sponges, attracting large amounts of contaminants both in the air and in water. Eventually all the little spaces fill up and a new carbon catcher is necessary. Activated charcoal is typically used for both air and water, such as in air filters, water filters, or fish tanks. It can also be found in stick form or bags.
  - See the toolkit for where you can find odor-absorbing charcoal.
4. Remove shoes before entering the house. This will reduce the likelihood that outdoor particles, such as tar, pesticides, and many other pollutants, will enter the home and become airborne. Anything that an individual steps on such as oil, tar, pesticides, bird droppings, feces, fungus, bacteria, pollution, dust, lead, pollen, bugs bits – to name but a few--become dust and may be inhaled or ingested.
5. Have your indoor air tested for radon. As you may recall from earlier in the module, radon is a radioactive gas and carcinogen produced by the natural breakdown of radium-containing rocks, such as granite. Radon may also occur in water, particularly if the water is from artesian wells drilled in radium-containing bedrock. When radon is present in water, it can become airborne when it is aerated by a shower or a running faucet. It is most harmful when it is aerated and inhaled, as opposed to drinking it. Tests are available and recommended for basements where granite or cracks in the foundation may allow radon to build up in the air.
  - Note: if you use well water, check your local environmental authority concerning recommended frequency of testing for arsenic, radon and heavy metals.