

# PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT

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## **Portage county health department participates in Healthy Homes Awareness Month in April**

Every day Americans are exposed to health hazards in their homes. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Americans spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. Indoor hazards include mold, lead, radon, carbon monoxide, tobacco smoke, and pests. As Americans spend so much of their time indoors, these hazards can have negative effects on health including lead poisoning, carbon monoxide exposure, and injuries such as falls.

Despite the many hazards in homes, these health issues are preventable. To bring awareness to these health concerns, Ohio Governor John R. Kasich has designated April as Healthy Homes Awareness Month (HHAM). There are seven principles of having a healthy home. Healthy homes are dry, clean, and safe. These homes are well-ventilated and well-maintained as well as free of contaminants and pests. It is important to have a healthy home to reduce rates of lead poisoning, asthma, and falling hazards.

The Portage County Health Department is joining Gov. Kasich and the Ohio Department of Health to promote healthy homes for all Ohioans. In celebration of Healthy Homes Awareness Month, the Portage County Health Department is raising awareness about lead poisoning to the residents of Portage County. This year's HHAM theme, "Ohio Healthy Homes, Building a Foundation for Healthy Lives" underscores the importance of having and maintaining a healthy home to support wellness throughout people's lives. Families can maintain a healthy home by understanding the seven principles of a healthy home.

- Keep it dry. Prevent water damage and mold growth by checking your plumbing, your roof, and your draining system for leaks. Make sure your basement remains dry.
- Keep it clean. Remove clutter and contaminants from your home. Use a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuum and wet cleaning methods to remove small dust particles and lead-based paint dust.
- Keep it safe. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Put fire extinguishers in your home. Address possible home safety hazards, which can include uneven steps or missing railings.
- Keep it well-ventilated. Increase the amount of fresh air in your home. Eliminate tobacco smoke and test your home for radon and carbon monoxide.
- Keep it contaminant-free. Reduce your exposure to lead and other contaminants in your home. If your home is connected to a well, have the water tested regularly.
- Keep it well-maintained. Inspect, clean, and repair your home routinely. Check your gutters, downspouts, air filters, heating system, and batteries in smoke alarms regularly.
- Keep it pest-free. Seal cracks and openings to prevent insects and rodents from entering your home. Keep food in airtight containers and clean up any spills and extra food immediately.

For additional information, contact Becky Lehman at 330-296-9919, ext. 137 or visit the Portage County Health Department website at <http://www.co.portage.oh.us/healthdepartment.htm>.