



Baby's Breath – Air Quality and My Baby

There is nothing more peaceful than watching your baby sleeping, hearing their little sighs of contentment and absolute trust. All is right with the world. As parents we want this to be a reality, all is right with the world.

Your baby's resting breathing rate is twice that of the average adult. So they are using more air than you or me. That air in our homes, according to the EPA, is one of the top 5 health risks to Americans. Your indoor air is likely to be 2 to 6 times more polluted than the outside air even for those living in the "big city". The air in our homes is contaminated with cleaning chemicals, insulation, dust particles, synthetic fragrances, furniture fumes, paint fumes, carpet fumes, dust mites, mold, bacteria, smoke from fireplaces or cook tops, natural gas, and the list could go on and on. We are sealed in our energy efficient homes and on average we spend 90% of our time indoors, probably that is even truer for your baby.



How can you tell? Is **your** indoor air safe? There are tests you can run such as Radon testing, formaldehyde testing, particulate count testing, mold testing, carbon monoxide testing, etc. And many of these tests are good to do but honestly, look around first. What is in your home?

- Do you use cleaning chemicals?
- Do you use pesticides?
- Do you have synthetic carpet?
- Do you immediately take dry cleaning into your home?
- Have you painted baby's room?
- Do you have furniture made of synthetic materials or particle board? Is it new?
- Do you have pets in your home?
- Do you use natural gas or other combustion appliances in your home?
- Do you have a crawl space under your home that is less than inviting to visit? Are there cracks in the floors that would let that air in?
- Do you use the least expensive air filter you can find in your HVAC system?
- Do you change your air filter as recommended?
- Do you keep your windows closed?
- Do you feel better when you are away from home?

If you are like most of us, you answered "yes" to many of these questions. So now what? This means you need to improve your indoor air quality. Here is what **you** can do.

1. **Test your home for Radon.**- This is an easy test that you can do yourself and it is very affordable. You should test your home twice a year especially if you live in an area where Radon is prevalent.
2. **Open your windows and ventilate**– Just 15 minutes a day will let the fresh air in and the polluted indoor air out. Create a cross ventilation.

3. **Check your filters regularly and use a filter with a MERV rating of at least 11.** MERV is an industry measurement that stands for Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value and indicates what size of particles that are filtered out by the filter.
4. **Get rid of the chemical cleaners** – Check the labels, do you really want that stuff around your baby? Your baby is getting twice the dose of what you smell and breathe even in the next room. There are many recipes and how to's available to you.
5. **Do not use chemical air fresheners, deodorizers, or sanitizers.**
– These add toxins into your air and usually just cover up the problem. There are healthier natural remedies that you can make yourself.
6. **Skip the carpet** – Carpets are most often made of synthetic fibers that off gas for years and years and years, they trap dirt and pesticides, dust mites and if you track in on them, it most likely is staying. The chemical cleaners that we tend to use to clean the carpets are very toxic. Instead use hard surface flooring and go for natural fiber rugs you can wash or place in the sun to air out. If you have the carpet and can't see getting rid of it or are not able, vacuum regularly, more is better. Use a vacuum with a true HEPA filter and leave the shoes at the back door.
7. **Choose furniture that is made of solid wood, natural fibers and low or no-VOC finishes.** Try slightly used furniture that has already off gassed. You want to skip the particle board which contains formaldehyde and off gases. If you must have that new set, make sure you purchase it months before the baby arrives and leave it in the garage open and assembled or other ventilated area to off gas out of your home and before the baby starts breathing it.
8. **Choose a certified organic crib mattress** – the number of chemicals in typical mattresses is staggering. This is the best investment you can make since your baby will spend such a large amount of time sleeping.
9. **Choose No or Low-VOC paints** – VOCs are volatile organic compounds and are usually what you smell in paint. There are healthier options available including AMF Safecoat, BioShield, Mythic, and others. Keep in mind if you get your paint at a local store even it its low-VOC if they mix it with a standard pigment, they just increased the VOC's. If you use one of the paints list they will use a no or low-VOC pigment to create your color selection. Just make sure you ask. If they don't know, go somewhere else. As with any product please test it first for any reactions.
10. **Have the combustion (like gas) appliances** checked annually and make sure they are ventilated properly.
11. **Install smoke detectors and CO detectors** if you have gas heat or other combustion appliances in your home.
12. If you live in an older home **test for lead and asbestos** before doing any renovations.
13. **Do NOT use pesticides in your home-** Use good housekeeping and natural methods for keeping pest out.



14. If you have a chimney and burn wood or coal, **clean your chimney at least annually** before the heating season to minimize combustion toxins from backing up in your home and reduce your chance of fire.

So, you have a list of things to do to improve the air your baby breathes. The steps are simple and really not too expensive. Remember you have what it takes to be the best mom or dad for your baby.



It can all be right with the world.

Resources:

Radon: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/radon/radontest.html>

<http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/radon/index.aspx>

Air Quality: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/insidest.html#Intro1>

<http://healthychild.org/>

Pesticides: <http://www.panna.org/resources/children>

Safer Cleaners: http://healthychild.org/blog/comments/recipes_for_safer_cleaners/

Wings of Eagles Healthy Living