



Leave those shoes at the door

Look What the Cat Dragged In? Dog? Mom and Dad?

There are so many things about to change in your life with the arrival of your new baby. You cannot even imagine what will change. Most of these changes will involve how you look at the world, how you prioritize you time, resources, what is important; what is safe for the baby. How you live in your home will be part of those changes. You will probably have plastic plugs in your electrical outlets, safety gates at the stairs or in a doorway, safety locks on the cabinet doors and drawers, and you will probably have to allow just a little extra time to get that safety latch open on the commode. We have talked a lot in previous lessons about making changes for improving the air quality in your home.

When you make these changes for safety and health you want to feel like you have created a safe haven, a sanctuary of sorts for your little one and your entire family. By some estimates, we bring in 80% of the dirt in our homes from outside. So why would you bring in all that dirt from outside?

Think about it. Where did the cat go today? What did it track back into your home? Have you treated your cat for fleas with a typical topical treatment? Not a cat person, how about your puppy? Was he digging in the back yard or the neighbor's trash? Flea treatment? No pets? Where did you go today? What did you walk through at the gas station? The parking lot? The office? The grocery store? The public restroom? Did you walk through any pesticides? The answer is most likely yes to more than one of these questions. This is what you are bringing home on your shoes, walking across the floor and possibly the carpet where your little one will spend more time than you imagine. If you have carpet, much of what you track in is staying no matter how much you vacuum.

So what can you do?

Leave the shoes at the door. Simply do not wear them in the house. To entire cultures across the world this is normal behavior. Ask your friends and family to take their shoes off too. Just put a shelf by the door for the shoes and maybe even a sign. You could provide slippers or booties. Ask the people doing repairs or working in your home to remove their shoes or provide them with shoe covers like what you find in the hospital. For those that refuse to remove their shoes or wear booties, make sure you have a mat both outside your door and inside. This will help remove more dirt before it comes in.

Does anyone in your home work with chemicals, toxins, or pesticides? If so, it will probably stick to their clothes. They could change at work. Maybe you have a mudroom where they enter your home. They could have a change of clothes there or go straight to the bathroom or laundry room and remove the clothes. Keep these clothes in a separate laundry basket from the rest of the family, especially the baby.

Maybe there are no toxic chemicals that you know of at work. Do you have those suits dry-cleaned? It is estimated that 80% of dry cleaners use the chemical perchloroethylene or PERC also known as tetrachloroethylene. PERC is neurotoxin and a known carcinogen. When you rip off the plastic cover from the dry cleaning you are getting a dose of PERC. It then dissipates throughout the house. Instead of taking it right in and hanging those clothes in your closet, take off the plastic cover and let them air out a day or two in the garage or outside. Then bring in the clothes. The hangers that come home with your clothes covered in paper are soaked in the chemical as well. Better yet, find a dry cleaner that used a "wet" cleaning method. This is a much healthier option for you, your baby, and your dry cleaner.

Removing your shoes and contaminated clothing at the door will go a long way to reducing the dirt and toxins that come into your home, your sanctuary. It will also go a long way to improving your concern the first time your new baby picks up that cereal off the floor and before you can stop it, it is in their mouth.

Your floors will still get dirty especially with a baby. You will still have to mop and clean but the toxic level of the dirt in your home will be much less which is healthier for your little one.

Resources:

<http://www.shoetikit.com/index.html>

<http://www.epa.gov/drycleaningrule/index.html>