



COLUMBIA CENTER
FOR CHILDREN'S
ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH

MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

HEALTHY HOME HEALTHY CHILD: KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD



1

Treasure! Community Action. Community groups, such as churches, block, and tenant associations, can help create unity about neighborhood environmental problems, and inform elected officials and government agencies to improve conditions.

Take Action:

1. Join your tenant or block association and go to their meetings.
2. Talk with people in your church about environmental problems and what you could do together.
3. Write or talk to your local elected officials. Find them at http://www.votesmart.org/official_local_page.php?lid=898

2

Warning! Lead Paint is often found on exterior windows and trim of old buildings.

Why? Lead paint is bad for your health, indoors or outdoors, as paint chips can flake off and be eaten or inhaled by children.

Take Action:

1. Make sure your building's exterior is not peeling and is covered by lead-free paint.
2. Get your child tested for lead poisoning.

3

Warning! Outdoor Air Pollution. Cars, busses, construction sites and building boilers produce diesel and gasoline exhaust, dust and soot that pollute the air.

Why? Tiny airborne particles damage our lungs. One particular group of chemicals found in air pollution, called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), causes reduced birth weight in babies, and delays in cognitive development leading to lower IQ scores. Lastly, certain PAHs are known to cause cancer.

Take Action: Get involved in community efforts to improve outdoor air quality by:

1. Report idling vehicles to 311.
2. Support the NYC government initiative to require all buildings to burn #2 fuel oil.
3. Sign up for air quality updates at www.cleanairny.org.

4

Warning & Treasure! Bodegas provide convenient shopping near your home and new programs from the NYC Health Department are increasing the selection of healthy food and drinks.

Why? Bodegas are known to offer packaged foods and sugary drinks, but now more stores offer fruits, vegetables, and low-fat milk.

Take Action:

1. Ask your bodega owner to stock low-fat milk, and fruits, vegetables, dried beans and grains you want.
2. Ask your bodega owner to get involved with the NYC Healthy Bodega initiatives like "Adopt-A-Bodega" or "Farm to Bodega".
3. Talk with your block or tenant's association to increase demand for these foods at your bodega.

5

Warning! Extreme Weather. City neighborhoods have many challenges when preparing for extreme weather events like a blizzard, flooding, hurricanes and heat waves.

Why? During all seasons, extreme weather can cause discomfort and stress, especially for those that are most vulnerable like children and older adults.

Take Action:

1. Plant or adopt a tree or garden. Trees provide cooling shade and provide oxygen. Contact 311 for more information about replacing damaged or missing trees on your street.
2. Check on your neighbors in extreme weather conditions. Make sure isolated neighbors, especially older adults, are safely escorted to cooling centers or safe places.
3. Be Prepared!! Shelter in place, stay hydrated and be safe. Learn how to prepare an emergency kit at www.NYC.gov/readyny

6

Warning! Garbage, paper, and trash on the sidewalk.

Why? Uncovered garbage, waste paper, and trash cans attract pests, have an unpleasant look and smell that hurts neighborhood pride, and may lead to unsafe use of pesticides and poisons.

Take Action:

1. Talk with other tenants and your building manager about keeping garbage in sealed containers.
2. Make sure your building participates in NYC mandated recycling.
3. Ask your block association to join the “Adopt a Garbage Can” program on your street.

7

Treasure! Parks, Green and Open Space Parks and sidewalks provide space to walk and exercise.

Why? Even small amounts of exercise are important to maintain health and prevent heart disease and obesity.

Take Action:

1. Take the stairs instead of an elevator or get off the train early and walk home.
2. Take a walk with a friend or family member for 20-30 minutes every day.
3. Enroll your children in NYC Parks or school sports and dance programs. Check out: <http://www.nycgovparks.org/befitnyc>

8

Warning & Treasure! Dollar Store Dumping. Dollar stores have low prices and offer products in places where there are limited choices, but some products are low quality and made without environmental health protections.

Why? Dollar stores rarely carry products certified free of toxics like lead or BPA. They may also carry products that have been rejected as unsafe or poor quality by other stores.

Take Action:

1. Limit your shopping at dollar stores and choose what you buy with your family’s health and safety in mind.
2. Carefully select items at dollar stores and check for expiration dates.