



# Prescriptions for PREVENTION



Guidance from the Western States  
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit

## Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)



### Did you know?

**V**olatile organic compounds (VOCs) are gases that may be released from building materials, furniture and other household products. When someone breathes VOCs, their body absorbs them. There are thousands of different VOCs, and their health effects depend on the specific chemical and how much a person is exposed.



### Do

- ✓ **Look for the EPA Safer Choice label** when buying household products. These contain only a limited amount of VOCs.
- ✓ **Choose products like:**
  - ✓ Unscented, "green" or "natural" products;
  - ✓ Cedar products instead of mothballs;
  - ✓ "Low-VOC" paints, carpeting and furniture water-based glues and solvents
  - ✓ "3 Free" nail polish, and nontoxic nail polish removers;
  - ✓ Nontoxic arts and crafts products for schools and home;
  - ✓ Green Guide for School-Settings;
  - ✓ Safer Cosmetics search tool.
- ✓ **Ventilate your home** when using cleaning products, painting indoors or using anything scented.
- ✓ **Use an exhaust fan** or range hood while cooking, especially if using a gas stove.



### Don't

- ✗ **Don't Smoke!**
  - Smoking (and vaping) is one of the most significant sources of VOCs;
  - For information on smoking cessation call 1-800-QUIT NOW, visit <https://smokefree.gov/>, or talk to your physician.
- ✗ **Avoid dry cleaning clothes.** Air out dry-cleaned clothes before storing or wearing.
- ✗ **Pregnant people and children should avoid nail salons**, which have high concentrations of VOCs.



For more information, scan the code or visit  
[wspehsu.ucsf.edu/prescriptions-for-prevention-environmental-hazards](http://wspehsu.ucsf.edu/prescriptions-for-prevention-environmental-hazards)