



Prescriptions for PREVENTION



Guidance from the Western States
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit

The Built Environment



How do built environments impact our health?

Where we locate our homes, schools, community, office buildings and other built structures can affect our health including their proximity to hazardous waste sites or other sources of air, water and soil pollution; access (or lack of) to well lighted and maintained parks; and; access to public transport, safe sidewalks, walking and bike paths.

Well designed built environments help avoid conditions like obesity, heart disease, diabetes, breathing problems like asthma, some cancers, and cognitive decline.

Our health can also be affected by how we design our homes, schools, office buildings and other built structures – where most of us spend

90% of our time – including the health effects of off-gassing of volatile chemicals from the materials we use for building, poor ventilation systems, exposure to radon and mold, and types of energy and waste reduction used.

How can you help improve your built environment?



Buildings

- ✓ Choose sustainable and less toxic building materials. See [Healthy Homes](#) and the [US Green Building Council](#) for more information.
- ✓ Advocate for [Integrated Pest Management](#) in all spaces (pest management that reduces chemical use and uses multiple strategies, instead of relying on pesticides).
- ✓ Advocate for energy efficiency, recycling and composting in your community.

Outdoors

- ✓ Support efforts to increase green spaces (parks, tree plantings etc) in your community.
- ✓ Look up your neighborhood exposures on [EPA's EJ Screen](#).
- ✓ Ask local leaders to support policies and programs that make it easier for people to walk, bike, take public transport, have access to healthy foods, clean air and clean water. You could point them to the [EPA's Sustainable Materials Management Strategic Plan](#).



For details on specific exposures and health risks, check out all the [Prescriptions for Prevention](#), in English and Spanish!