



Prescriptions for PREVENTION

Guidance from the Western States
Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit



Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)



Did you know?

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are gases that can be released from building materials, furniture, and other household items. 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 cleaning products. These contain only a limited amount of VOCs
- Choose products like:
 - Unscented products
 - Cedar products instead of mothballs
 - "Low-VOC" paints, carpeting and furniture, water-based glues and solvents, "3 Free" nail polish, 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.
 - Use the back burners as the hood fan captures more gas from these locations
- Those who are pregnant and children should avoid nail salons, which have high concentrations of VOCs



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, or talk to your physician
- Don't use air fresheners
- Don't dry clean clothes
 - If dry cleaning is necessary, choose a green cleaning service if possible
 - Air out dry-cleaned clothes before storing or wearing
- If there is a chemical disaster, follow all orders immediately
 - Sheltering in place may be recommended, during which you should close all windows and doors in stay inside
 - Or, evacuations may be ordered. [Prepare an emergency kit](#) with important documents and medications. Follow instructions promptly
 - [More instructions here](#)



For more information, scan the code or visit: wspehsu.ucsf.edu/prescriptions-for-prevention

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