
Remodeling Tips for a Healthier Home

A makeover can do wonders for the way your home looks, and it's also a great opportunity to cut down on allergens and make your home healthier in other ways as well.

Everyday Health: What advice would you give readers who are looking to remodel for a healthier home?



Paula Baker-Laporte, FAIA (econesthomes.com)

Architect and building biologist, co-founder of EcoNest in Ashland, Ore., and co-author of Prescriptions for A Healthy House

First, make sure that your home is free of the obvious health concerns such as mold, pesticides, lead paint, asbestos, and high electro-magnetic radiation. If there is a forced air system, do a thorough chemical-free cleaning and replace filters with high efficiency ones. And if you can replace the heating system with hydronic radiant heating or a masonry heater – wonderful! Next, concentrate on the bedroom. We spend about a third of our lives in this room. Take out carpeting, put in a natural wood-floor finish made with non-toxic oils, use an organic metal-free bed, establish a neutral electro-climate in the bedroom (maintain a humidity level of 35 to 55 percent), finish the walls with soothing clay-based paints or plaster, and keep it clean. Stay educated and aware of how new toxins get introduced into the home. Toxic chemicals are ubiquitous in home-decorating products, and it is up to the consumer to shop wisely.



Ron and Lisa Beres, BBEI, CGBP (greennest.com)

Creators of Green Nest, authors of Just GREEN It!

We would suggest starting with indoor air quality as a top priority. We refer to indoor air quality as the umbrella of the home. If you are unknowingly using toxic products that contain VOCs (volatile organic compounds) which are off-gassing chemicals into your air, this can negatively affect your overall indoor air and make you and your family susceptible to a host of toxins, including carcinogens.

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Next, prioritize your must-haves versus your wishes. This will aid you in maintaining a better grasp on what items you would like to invest the majority of your resources into. Again, many homeowners will make choices on energy-efficient items, including energy-efficient windows or solar power. These are great investments because once you begin receiving a return on your investment through government rebates and tax incentives, you can use these funds to further improve your living space.

In addition, investing in cabinetry free of formaldehyde is an investment in your health, and water purification systems are a smart investment from both a health and a waste perspective.

Finally, when it comes to paint, choose zero-VOC or low-VOC options, as these tend to be priced equally or very slightly higher than traditional paint and can be custom-colored to match any décor. Remember, you don't have to sacrifice style for health.



William Beson (cambriausa.com)

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Research, research, research! Make sure you find out what a product is made out of before purchasing. Also, find out what the upkeep is and what products that upkeep involves. For example, does a countertop need to be sealed? Is formaldehyde used in the sealer? Products that are GREENGUARD-certified have met rigorous standards and are deemed healthy for your home by an industry-leading standard. {Editor's note: GREENGUARD is a nonprofit group that evaluates the chemical emission levels of products and materials based on standards set by public health agencies.}
