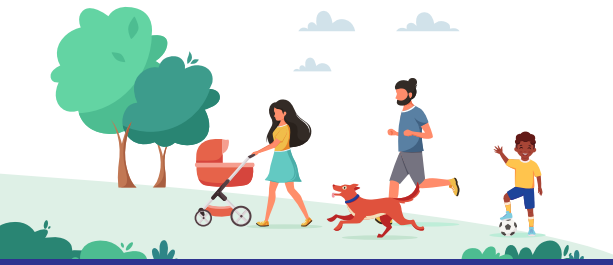


Children's Environmental Health in New Hampshire

What is Environmental Health?

Environmental health refers to the relationship between the environment (natural or human-made) and the health of people and their communities. Environmental health involves the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land and soil on which we live, learn, work, and play.



Why is Children's Environmental Health Important?



Environmental hazards can have a greater impact on children because their bodies are still growing. For their size, children breathe more air, drink more water, and eat more food than adults.



Young children spend their time close to the ground. They use their hands and mouth to explore and learn about the environment.

Key Environmental Factors Impacting Children's Health

Radon

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is associated with certain types of cancer, particularly lung cancer. Radon can get into your home when it leaks from the soil into cracks or other openings in the foundation.

Children may take in more radon because of their lung shape, size, and breathing rate. Radon risks add up over time, so reducing children's exposure is important.



**1 in 3 homes
have radon**

1 in 3 homes tested in New Hampshire have radon levels above the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) action level of 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L).¹

What to do: The NH Radon Program recommends testing your home every two years and installing a system to reduce radon if the levels are 4 picocuries per liter or higher. You can request a free [radon in air test kit](#) from the NH Radon Program.



Asthma and Air Quality

Poor air quality can trigger asthma symptoms. Common causes include mold, pet dander, the presence of rodents, insects, and air pollution from airborne dust or smoke (from tobacco, wildfires, or wood burning).



Data from 2021 indicates that asthma could be affecting the lives of over 20,000 children in New Hampshire.²



On average there are over 850 emergency room visits per year in New Hampshire for childhood asthma.³

What to do: Remove asthma triggers by eliminating mold, pet dander, and smoke from your indoor space. Complete and follow an Asthma Action Plan. Monitor the air quality index at www.airnow.gov, and limit outdoor activities when the air quality index level is high.



Childhood Lead Poisoning

1,000



In 2023, over 1,000 New Hampshire children were poisoned by lead, resulting in elevated blood lead levels high enough to impair their ability to think, learn, and concentrate.

Lead can be found in dust, paint, soil, drinking water, and in a variety of consumer products.

If your home was built before 1978, it may contain lead-based paint. Everyday activities, such as opening and closing lead-painted windows and doors or performing common household renovations, repairs, and painting can generate nearly invisible lead dust. If lead dust is ingested or inhaled, even in very small amounts, it can be a serious health risk, especially for young children and pregnant women.⁴

What to do:

- Test all one- and two-year-old children's blood lead levels.
- Hire a [licensed lead inspector](#) to find out if your home has lead hazards.
- Use an [EPA "RRP Certified" \(Renovate, Repair, Paint\) contractor](#) who understands how to use lead-safe work practices when renovating or repairing your home.
- Regularly wash hands, toys, bottles, pacifiers, floors, windowsills, and other areas where leaded dust may settle.
- Be careful that you don't bring home lead from your job site or hobby.



Water Quality



About 46% of families who live in New Hampshire get their drinking water from private wells.⁵



Arsenic is found in around 24% of well water in New Hampshire at elevated levels.⁶



Manganese is found in around 6% of well water in New Hampshire at levels unsafe for young children under 12 months old.⁶

What to do if you have a private well: The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services recommends that homeowners with private wells test every three to five years for common contaminants including arsenic, bacteria, lead, manganese, and uranium. Test your water at a commercial lab or the DHHS Public Health Lab. www.des.nh.gov/water/drinking-water/private-wells

What to do if you have public water: Lead could be present in the pipes carrying water to your home or in the pipes or plumbing fixtures in your home. Consider testing your water for lead. Reduce lead exposure by flushing the cold water tap for a few minutes every morning before use and only use cold water for drinking, cooking, or making baby formula.



The New Hampshire Children's Environmental Health Initiative

The New Hampshire Environmental Public Health Tracking program is working to identify children's environmental health issues and reduce exposure by providing information and tools to families.

¹ [New Hampshire Radon Program Data Brief](#)

² [NH DHHS Data Portal: Asthma Prevalence Data](#)

³ Based on analysis of visits by NH residents to Emergency Departments in NH, MA, and ME in the New Hampshire Uniform Healthcare Facility Discharge Data Set (UHFDDS) from 2017-2021

⁴ [DHHS Lead Exposure Data Brief, 2023](#)

⁵ [Private Wells | NH Department of Environmental Services](#)

⁶ [NH DHHS Data Portal: Private Well Water Quality Data](#)

For more resources and information, visit:

[Children's Environmental Health | New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services \(nh.gov\)](#)

