



For Immediate Release: October 12, 2017

Media Contact:

Vermont Department of Health
802-863-7281

Vermont Helps Schools and Families to Create Healthy Environments for Children

Celebrating Children's Environmental Health Day

BURLINGTON – Children interact with our environment differently than adults do, which is why children's environmental health is so important. As their bodies rapidly grow and develop, they breathe in more air, and take in more food and liquids in proportion to their body weight than adults. Their bodies act like human sponges, and this makes them more susceptible to the impact of some chemicals.

To help kids grow, play and learn in a healthy environment, the Vermont Department of Health offers a wide range of resources and supports for parents, schools and child care providers.

"Just being a kid, you are often exposed to potentially harmful chemicals indoors and out," said Michelle Reddinger with the department's Division of Environmental Health. "They play, maybe don't wash up as much as they should, and put their hands in their mouths. This is true especially of younger children." Reddinger noted that according to the EPA, we spend nearly 90 percent of our time indoors, where pollutants may be two to five times higher than outdoor levels. "Kids spend many hours a day in school breathing air that may have fumes from cleaning supplies. This means we need to take extra steps to be sure the common cleaning products used around children are as safe as possible."

Through its Envision Program, the Health Department works with schools to establish and maintain a healthy environment. "Our goal is to help teachers and the building facilities staff to find alternatives to products that contain harsh chemicals," said Reddinger. "Disinfecting wipes, for example, are easy to use, but are generally not safe for everyday classroom use. They contain harsh chemicals that have been linked to health issues, and can cause eye, skin and respiratory irritation. The fragrances in these products can trigger allergies and asthma and have been linked to hormone disruption and reproductive issues."

Reddinger also encourages families and caregivers to look for non-toxic alternatives to their common household cleaning supplies.

“There are relatively inexpensive and effective alternatives to everyday kitchen and bathroom cleaners, pesticides and laundry products. There are also many ways to quickly and cheaply make your own cleaning supplies,” Reddinger said. “And if you use non-toxic supplies, maybe the kids can help out more with the cleaning chores!”

Check out these resources for ideas and information, or visit

healthvermont.gov/environment/children

- **Healthy Schools and our Creating, Safer and Classrooms guidance:**
healthvermont.gov/environment/school
- **Healthy Homes and our Living Green guide:** healthvermont.gov/environment/home

Follow Children’s Environmental Health Day on Twitter: [#CEHDay](https://twitter.com/CEHDay)

For health news, alerts and information, visit healthvermont.gov

Join us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/healthvermont)

Follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/healthvermont)

###