

Introduction



Our modern world is full of multiple-pollution challenges. Everything from the air we breathe, to the water we drink, to the food we eat, and the personal care products we use, now contains low-level amounts of toxic chemicals. At the same time our children's health is declining in epidemic proportions. Could there be a connection between the two? What if I told you that your own home could be a major contributor in both these scenarios? Would you know if your home is helping or harming your family's health?

Unfortunately today we all seem to know someone with depression, fatigue, insomnia, frequent headaches, muscle and joint pains, irritability, immune problems, or cancer. Or we know a child with asthma, allergies, autism, or a behavior or learning problem. Many of us are faced with these challenges in our own family and want to know the causes for these problems and better solutions. But left to your own devices, where do you begin to look for answers that make sense? Where are the solutions that will allow you to get involved and help your family and yourself? Well, right here in this book, is one good place to start!

Homes that Heal was researched and written to empower mothers and family members to keep or take back their health on a daily basis. We are about to embark on a revolutionary journey together in the most personal of domains — your own home. “But wait a minute,” some of you are already saying, “there's no problem with MY home, there couldn't be, it's:

- Brand new;
- Perfectly clean;
- Just remodeled;
- MINE!

(Check the appropriate box for your answer.)

I know, I know. We all assume our homes are safe and healthy places. After all, look how much we spend on them! Our home is often the single largest investment we make in a lifetime; what more could there be to it than that? Actually, there's quite a bit more to it and you're about to find out.

So here are a couple of thoughts to ponder to set this process in motion:

1. How is it that your cereal box can tell you more about its ingredients and what it does for your health than the building materials your home is made from?

Is it too much to ask that your new home or remodel has its own health and safety label so that you can compare one house to another and evaluate the health benefits or the possible health risks imposed upon your family?

2. How can common household products and personal care products be so easily available when they contain known toxic chemicals?

It's time for us to ask a lot more questions when it comes to our homes. But first we must educate ourselves so that we know the right questions to ask. Once we have the right information under our belt, we must persist with our questions until we find the true answers and solutions. How do we know if we've found the right answer? We simply ask, "Does this ... (product, material, service) add to the amount of toxic chemicals or pollution in my home or not?" If it does, choose a safer alternative.

Our goal is to reduce the chemical and pollution load on all of us while at the same time helping to create natural, ecologically sound living environments that nurture our families' health.

Not knowing how to get started is a major factor in peoples' failed attempts to make positive changes in their lives. With this in mind, every chapter in *Homes that Heal* identifies a variety of places to get started transforming your home. Whether you want to do something grand or something subtle, you will find something you can begin today. Even those with zero budget can start by getting rid of toxic products lining the darker recesses of kitchen and bathroom cabinets, and if all else fails you can at least open a window in your bedroom and air it out!

For ease of use, this book is divided into two parts. Part one focuses on the physical structure of your home and explains how a conventionally built new home is different from a healthfully built new home. Remodels are also discussed. Part two focuses on how we live in our homes and the many ways we ourselves pollute them. Take the *Healthy Home Quiz* to find out how healthy your home is. Then, with detective-like curiosity, we will explore your home room by room looking for any health hazards, and discuss ways to remedy these situations. Each chapter ends with a list of the most immediate gains you can begin working on to upgrade the health of your home. The back of the book has a glossary of terminology and a resource section of different organizations, newsletters, books, and product suppliers to help you explore all of this further.

If you find any of this information helpful, please do spread the word. The "mothers' grapevine" is a powerful communication tool that allows everyone to participate and contribute. Together we are a powerful force to reckon with! Our children and future generations are depending on us to safeguard their health and their future. Everyone who reads this book gets the chance to become a true hero or heroine in a child's life. How extraordinary! Won't you do your part and help?

Thank you in advance for any of your efforts.

L. Athena