

# HEALTHY FLOORING: What You Need to Know About Your Home

- **Why is the type of flooring in my house important?**
  - Carpets can cause health problems for children and people with asthma. Smooth surface flooring, such as linoleum, tile, and hardwood floors are recommended by doctors for asthmatics because they are easier to clean and less likely to harbor mold.
  - Children spend 93% of their time indoors! Young children, especially, spend a lot of time on the floor.
  - Manufacturers recommend that carpets should be replaced at least every 10 years depending on the type of carpet. This replacement does not always happen in affordable or low income housing.
- **Why is carpeting not good for people with asthma?**
  - Doctors of asthmatics recommend removing carpet because it can harbor dust, dust mites, pest droppings, and if it gets wet, mold - all things that can trigger asthma attacks.
  - Carpets are much harder to clean than smooth surface floorings. Carpets acts as "sinks" trapping asthma triggers and other hazards in them despite cleaning.
  - Some studies show that carpets retain more lead dust than smooth surface flooring.
- **I live in a home with carpeting. How can I keep it as healthy as possible?**
  - Reduce dirt you track in by having a no-shoe policy.
  - Have a track off mat at the door to each entrance in your house.
  - Vacuum your home at least once a week with a HEPA vacuum filter.
  - Don't wet-vac your carpet because it can lead to mold.



- **Are some carpets better than other?**

Yes:

- Shag carpets are the hardest to clean.
- Level loop carpets are the easiest to clean.  
Ask for carpets that have low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs).



- Neither cleans as well as smooth surface flooring.

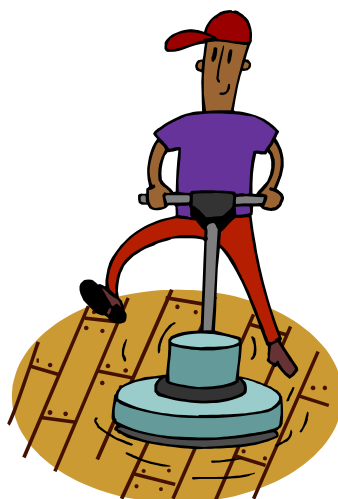
- **What if I do without carpeting, but I like rugs? Would they be a health problem?**

- Not if you use area rugs and throw rugs. If you use these items, try to clean them or have them dry cleaned at least once per year. If you can, shake them free of dust and dirt as often as possible.

- **If I get a home without carpeting, am I getting a cheaper home?\***

- No. Wall-to-wall carpeting is the cheapest flooring possible. It costs about \$3 per square foot.
- Other flooring, like linoleum, tile, and hardwood floors can cost anywhere from \$5-12 per square foot.

**\* It is important to note that if you buy a house with carpeting, it's hard to put in other types of flooring. Carpet sometimes is put down directly on concrete. In that case, to change the flooring in such a house, it would be necessary to tear the carpet out and create an entirely new sub-floor. It is better to buy a house without carpeting and leave yourself the option of carpet later on. This is a way to save the effort and expense.**



Questions? Contact the Boston Urban Asthma Coalition at (617)279-2271. Prepared by the Boston Urban Asthma Coalition.