

HEALTHY, WEALTHY & WISE

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In This Issue

What Causes “New Carpet Smell” and is it Harmful?

Detect-A-Leak Week

Is Salt Making us Overweight?

Have a Safe Memorial Day Weekend

Recipe: Whole Grain Banana Muffins

Good Clean Funnies and Quick Tips



There's nothing like the smell of new carpet. But have you ever wondered what causes that unique odor? Is it formaldehyde or some other toxic chemical? Is there cause for concern?

MEMORIAL DAY

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What Causes “New Carpet Smell” and is it Harmful?

Smell is the most primitive of the five senses. The fragrances of food enhance our sense of taste. Pleasant scents create a feeling of calm and contentment, while unpleasant ones may be a cause for alarm. Unfamiliar odors can create anxiety, especially when the source is unknown.

The nose knows, as they say. But what about “new carpet smell?” For many, this odor is welcome as we enter a carpet store or have new carpet installed in our own homes. It smells like a new beginning. But is this smell hazardous?

Volatile Organic Compounds

The unmistakable odor produced by new carpet is caused by a volatile organic compound or VOC. Volatile simply means it evaporates readily at normal temperatures. This volatility makes it easy for us to smell. VOC's are present in many new man-made building materials including sheet vinyl floorcovering, wall coverings, floor finishes, adhesives and paint. VOCs are what create “new car smell”, “new

carpet smell” and the smell that you probably don't enjoy so much after you paint a room.

There are many different types of VOCs but the one related to new carpet odor is 4-phenylcyclohexene [4-PCH], a by-product of the synthetic latex binders used to hold the carpet backing together. Although new carpet does produce this volatile organic compound, emissions from carpet as measured during EPA studies ranked among the lowest overall contributors to indoor air quality issues. Most of the VOCs present in carpet dissipate within 24-48 hours after installation. Ventilation during and after carpet installation helps to reduce that length of time.

EPA Testing

Several years ago, as the EPA was renovating its Washington DC headquarters, some employees complained that odor from the new carpet was making them sick with a variety of symptoms including

Continued on next page ▶



Whole Grain Banana Muffins

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup whole wheat pastry flour
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup oat bran
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 3/4 cup raisins
- 1/2 cup nonfat plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup low fat sour cream
- 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 2 teaspoons egg whites
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3 small ripe bananas, mashed
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F [200 degrees C]. Grease a 12 cup muffin tin.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together whole wheat flours, oat bran, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Stir in raisins. In another bowl, mix together yogurt, sour cream, applesauce, maple syrup, egg whites, vanilla, and bananas. Pour yogurt mixture into flour mixture, and mix just enough to combine. Spoon batter into muffin cups. Sprinkle one teaspoon pecans over batter in each cup.
3. Bake muffins in preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven, and transfer muffins to a wire rack to cool.

recipe courtesy allrecipes.com

► Continued from cover

respiratory irritation, headaches and general malaise. The EPA enlisted help from carpet and latex manufacturers to investigate the complaints.

Following laboratory testing and extensive government agency review, no connection between 4-PCH and any kind of adverse human health outcome could be established. As a result, the EPA describes 4-PCH as an “unremarkable chemical.”

Many people have the belief that “new carpet odor” is caused by formaldehyde used in the production of carpet. Research conducted by the School of Textile Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology dispelled this widely held myth. Current industry standards are in place so that all new carpet produced is monitored for this chemical. Formaldehyde has not been used in the production of carpet in the United States for decades.

Latex Issues

What about people who are allergic to latex? The latex used in modern carpet is synthetic and not linked with the allergic reactions caused by proteins found in natural latex. All of the materials used in the manufacture of carpeting are primarily the same harmless materials found in clothing, furniture and bedding. Nylon, polypropylene, polyester and wool constitute the majority of the components found in carpet.

The conclusion is that there is no evidence that new carpet odor is a cause for alarm. However, since odors can create different reactions in individuals, it makes sense to address any complaints to prevent discomfort. As mentioned earlier, ventilating the structure during and after installation is the best way to reduce the buildup of 4-PCH in the indoor environment.

Detect-a-Leak Week

Detect-a-Leak Week is held annually every May. This is the perfect time to give your home a once over, checking for leaks that may be costing you money. Even a small leak can add up to hundreds of dollars a year, and could damage surrounding fixtures, cabinets, or floors.

One of the biggest culprits is the toilet. You often can't tell if your toilet is leaking simply by examining it. Place a few drops of food coloring, just enough to slightly color the water, in the main tank. Let it sit for several hours, then check the toilet bowl. If you see the color in the bowl, you have a leaky toilet and it needs to be repaired.

Check for dripping faucets, pipes, and connections by examining all plumbing in your home. Use a lightweight cloth to wipe around each connection. If your cloth becomes wet, you have leaky plumbing that needs to be repaired.



Don't forget to stop those leaks that you can control. Turn faucets off all the way, and don't let water run when you brush your teeth. Don't use your toilet as a wastebasket. Instead of throwing items such as tissues in the toilet and flushing, use a small wastebasket in your bathroom instead.



Is Salt Making us Overweight?

Too much salt can be bad for us. It causes increased blood pressure, an increased risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart disease. And now, researchers have found that high salt intake might lead to the overconsumption of fatty foods, increasing the risk of obesity.

Two studies discussing this issue were published by Australian researchers recently. The first study revealed that test subjects who ate more salt could not detect increases in the fat content of foods. Thus, the saltier their

diet, the more likely they would eat fattier foods without realizing it.

The second study found that participants consumed less when their food contained low salt and high fat. But when given high salt, high fat foods, those same subjects consumed significantly more food. The researchers believe that excessive salt reduces the body's ability to know when it is full.

These researchers have called for a reduction in salt in processed foods, believing it could have a major impact on rates of obesity.

Have a Safe Memorial Day Weekend

Memorial Day marks the beginning of the summer recreation season. Unfortunately, it can sometimes be a time for accidents. Make sure you and your family are safe this Memorial Day weekend by remembering these safety tips.

Play Safely

If you are going to be spending time near or on the water, don't forget to be safe. If you will be on a boat, wear a life jacket, follow all boating rules, and don't operate a boat while drinking. If you will be swimming, remember to swim with a buddy, swim only in safe water, and never dive into shallow water. All children should be supervised at all times around any type of water. If you will be spending any time in the sun, don't forget to use sunscreen and wear a hat.



Drive Safely

More people will be on the road on Memorial Day weekend, making for congested roads and highways. Don't forget to always wear your seatbelt and observe all posted traffic signs and speed limits. It is especially important for children to be in proper child safety seats in your car. And never drink and drive.

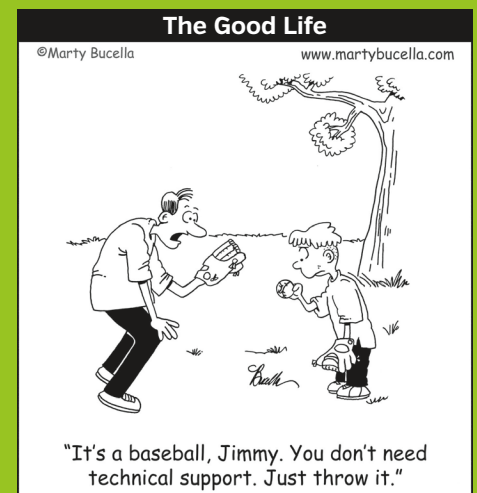
Good Clean Funnies

When You Have Kids of Your Own

A little girl was staring intently at her mother as she cleaned the kitchen after dinner. Finally, the girl asked, "Why are some of your hairs white, Mama?"

Her mother replied, "Well, whenever you do something naughty that makes me unhappy, one of my hairs turns white."

The little girl thought about this for a little while. Then she turned to her mother and asked, "Is that why all of grandma's hairs are white?"



Quick Tips

Home Tip

Want an easy way to update your bathroom? Simply look up. If your vanity light is outdated or damaged, changing it can add a nice new glow to your bathroom. Most home improvement stores also sell towel bars, wall fixtures, trashcans, and even soap dispensers that coordinate with lighting fixtures. So if your budget has room, this is an easy way to update your entire bathroom without the need for a full remodel.

Food Tip

Although you can leave commercial peanut butter in your pantry, it is best to store it in the refrigerator. All natural peanut butter must be kept in the fridge and should not be stored in the pantry. Peanut butter contains oil which can begin to spoil at warmer temperatures. Keep the jar tightly sealed and use it within six months.

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Win a \$25 Restaurant Gift Card!

Read this edition of Healthy, Wealthy & Wise to find the answer to the following trivia question:

New carpet odor:

- a. is a by-product of synthetic latex used in carpet
- b. comes from formaldehyde used in manufacturing
- c. causes damage to mucous membranes
- d. is now available as a plug-in air freshener

Once you've found the correct answer, email it to anna@pcssuperior.com. At the end of the month, we will draw from the correct answers and someone will win a \$25 restaurant gift card!

Contest Expires 5/31/2016.

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