

Matt and Mabel, Pete,
Rob, Leo, Vi and Jill –

We call it Environmental Health, but

It's Your Scene, Teen



So...

Read the label, Mabel...

Turn it down then,

Townsend...

Check the CO, Leo...

Grow some plants, Vance...

Put drugs high, Vi...

It's your cat, Matt...

Don't drink from the lake,

Blake...

Take a pill, Jill...

Wash your hands, Hans...

Use latex, if you play, Tex...

and

Don't spill, Bill...

It's almost: Your environment is your health. For example: Purifying city water supplies is a major reason that you probably are going to live twice as long as someone born a century ago.

You've got a personal environment, too.

To help keep yourself fit and healthy, as well as live longer, you've got to take care of that personal environment as well as the rain forests, whales and ozone layer. So some of us at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences have put together a checklist of things you can do:

Read the label, Mabel:



Compare it with the labels on other products to see if you are buying the safest product for what you want to get done. Is it for inside use or out? Should you use the product with rubber gloves, respirators or goggles – and do you have them? If a label says, "Open windows and ventilate," hey, there's a reason. (Maybe you won't go brain-dead. Maybe the company won't get sued.)

Turn it down then, Townsend:



This may hit where you live, but even your favorite rock, or Bach, if too loud, can leave you asking, "Wha'?" Noise can make hearing decline and produce ringing, buzzing or roaring in the ears or head, forever. That's a long time to be asking people to repeat things. For more information call 1-800-241-1044.

Leo, check for CO:

Carbon monoxide from space heaters and other home heating sources can kill. You need smoke alarms, of course, but they won't alert you to CO. For that, you need to buy a carbon monoxide alarm.

Grow some plants, Vance:

There's evidence that plants, inside the house as well as out, clean the air.

21 Easy Steps to Personal Environmental Health Now



Iron-containing vitamins or drugs like aspirin can kill a kid brother or sister who thinks they're candy. Lock them up (we don't mean baby brother, but -) or put them out of reach. Same with paint thinners, drain openers and other chemicals. Contact the National Capital Poison Center at <http://www.poison.org> or your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.

Know the dangers of your job, Rob:

Even writers get paper cuts. You can fall off a ladder or be exposed to risks from petroleum products and solvents. Computer use and other repetitive tasks can lead to carpal tunnel syndrome. Take care.

Your cold may be your cat, Matt:

You could be allergic to dust mites, your cat, the pollen from trees, or cockroaches. A-a-a-choo! And wheeze! Plastic mattress and pillow covers and the elimination of dust-holders like curtains and rugs in your bedroom may help. Or, if it's trees and pollen that get to you, air conditioning and filters may provide relief.



Get "Something in the Air: Airborne Allergens," pub #98-495, from NIAID, 31 Center Dr., MSC 2520, Rm. 7A50, Bethesda, MD 20892 or e-mail ocpostoffice@flash.niaid.nih.gov

For a fact sheet, "Asthma & its Environmental Triggers," call NIEHS at (919) 541-3345.

Don't drink from the lake, Blake:

A crystal-clear stream or lake may be a nice place to wade but can harbor bacteria that can turn your stomach inside out. On hikes, take water along, or a disinfection kit.

Get Rid of the Lead, Ted:

There are deteriorating, pre-1950 buildings with flaking lead paint that ends up as dust on kid's hands and toys. And you know where their hands go. If tads in your family might be exposed to lead, push for them to have a simple blood test. For more information, call 1-800-424-LEAD. A short booklet called "Lead and Your Health" can be obtained by e-mailing your request to booklet@niehs.nih.gov



Hey, Ron, what about radon?

Radon is a gas you can't smell in your home, but you can test for it. The Institute of Medicine convened experts who looked at the available data and estimated that of about 160,000 annual lung cancer deaths, those related to radon might total 15,400 to 21,800, mostly because of a synergism between smoking and radon. But smokers are people, too.

The test is cheap, and ventilation often can turn high radon levels into low ones. For more information, call 1-800-SOS-RADON.

Beware of the heat, Pete:

In hot weather, exercise in the cooler hours. Keep water handy and drink plenty of it. See <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hsb>

Mind the ozone, Tyrone:

Ozone is the “bad twin” of oxygen – three atoms of oxygen linked together instead of two – that builds up when there are a lot of vehicle and factory emissions, warm weather and air stagnation. Ozone can irritate and damage the lungs, nose and throat, and make breathing hard, especially if you exercise outdoors during its peaks. When there are air quality alerts: Jog away from auto traffic, and, if you have asthma, bronchitis or emphysema, limit the time you spend outdoors. For more info: <http://www.noaa.gov/>

Don't overfill, Bill:

Since evaporating gasoline adds to the ozone problem, when you service your car or mower, don't spill or overfill.

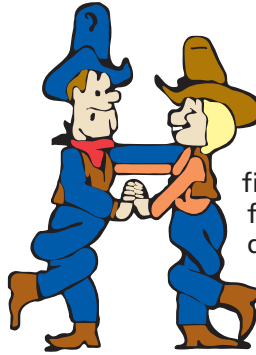
Wash your hands, Hans:

Whether you've been sneezing, or handling raw poultry or meat... Whether you've been to the toilet or changed Little Darling's diaper... Whether you are preparing to deliver a baby or perform brain surgery, wash your hands and environs (your kitchen cutting board for sure). In many situations, washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of infection – yes, maybe the most important preventive measure you can take.

Watch the drift, Cliff:

If you spray your peonies upwind of your *tomahtoes*, you may dose those rich, red orbs (as well as you and your family) with un-

approved pesticides. Some pesticides for non-food use have not been proved safe for foods.



Eat a good diet, Wyatt:

Not just an apple but five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day may really help keep the doctor away. For a booklet on “five a day” call 1-800-422-6237.

And take a vitamin pill, Jill:

The federal government recommends all females of childbearing age take 400 micrograms (0.4 milligrams) of folic acid, one of the B vitamins, daily, to reduce the chances of having a child with a neural tube defect, his or her spine laid open or brain missing. It's hard to get the needed amount in an ordinary diet, but you can get it in a multi-vitamin pill. The vitamin is needed regularly, before as well as during pregnancy. Get more information at <http://www.modimes.org>

Put the belt on, Shelton:

Race car drivers know that wearing seat and shoulder belts can reduce your risk by 45-50 percent. Other injury-preventing habits that smart folks take: wearing bike helmets, athletic cups and other protective athletic gear, looking around for the fire exits in a theater or hotel, checking your smoke detectors at home to make sure they beep, locking hunting rifles and other firearms away from kids and others who might misuse them, avoiding unlit and dangerous areas (and lit and dangerous people.) Smart folks also find a partner or two for climbing, swimming or other exploits — someone to get you out of a tight spot. A de-pickler.

Use latex if you play, Tex:

More than eight million Americans under 25 have sexually transmitted di-seases, including HIV infec-tions. Some of these diseases mean early death, infertility or cervical cancer. You can be 100% safe if you avoid sex – waiting until you're prepared to have a lasting relationship with an uninfected individual. But sexually active teens and young adults can gain considerable protection by correctly and consistently using latex (not animal skin) condoms. For additional information, call the National STD Hotline at 1-800-227-8922, or the National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-AIDS, or (in Spanish, 1-800-344-SIDA.) Or go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm>

Don't puff or chew, Stu:

You know tobacco users smell and get dark teeth and premature wrinkles. Even more gross: Smoking kills more people than AIDS, alcohol, drug abuse, car crashes, murders, suicides and fires combined. For help in quitting, call 1-800-4-CANCER, or Smoking and Health, 1-404-488-5705.

Watch the burn, Fern:

It's not just sunburn you need to worry about or even ordinary skin can-cer, which can usually be surgically removed with-out difficulty. It's not just wrinkles. It's burn-associated melanomas (malignant moles that can spread and kill) and cataracts that dim vision. Hats and other covers and ultraviolet-blocking sunglasses can help. For more on what melanomas look like (so you can get them removed before they remove you) call 1-800-4-CANCER.

We're not saying, Hide in the attic and take *no* risks. We're just against *dumb* risks.