

10 Steps to a Green Nursery

By Lisa Beres, cofounder and owner of GreenNest.com and author of the audio book [Learn To Make a Healthy Home](#)

The Crib

Problem: Formaldehyde can be found in baby furniture made with pressed wood products, urea-formaldehyde foam insulation (UFFI), tobacco smoke and permanent press/wrinkle-free fabrics. Formaldehyde exposure has been linked to eye, nose and throat irritation, coughing, fatigue, skin rashes, severe allergic reactions and cancer.

Solution: Avoid manufactured wood products such as particleboard, hardwood plywood paneling and medium-density fiberboard. Look for a well-constructed, handcrafted, natural wood crib that will grow with your child.

The Green Nest Pick: [Arts and Crafts Crib](#), \$720.

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Lead Paint

Problem: Many homes built before 1978 contain lead paint, which exposes contains a toxic heavy metal. This paint can be found on window frames, walls, old cribs and in new, imported toys and jewelry.

Solution: Use low- or zero-VOC (volatile organic compound) paints with natural pigments such as clay. These new paints are durable, cost-effective and less harmful to human and environmental health. Leave lead-based paint undisturbed if it is in good condition; do not sand or burn off paint that may contain lead. Use a lead test kit to identify places and household objects where lead is lurking.

The Green Nest Pick: [Interior Clay Paints](#), \$42.50 per gallon

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Crib Bedding

Problem: Your baby's bedding can consist of artificial, petroleum-derived foams and fibers, dangerous flame-retardant chemicals and pesticides, all of which can expose your baby to toxic fumes as they outgas. In addition, stain- and water-resistant treatments add more VOCs to the air we breathe.

Solution: Choose an organic, untreated, natural crib mattress with no chemical flame-retardants. Wool is a good substitute; it's naturally flame-retardant and dust-mite resistant. Avoid permanent-press sheets or draperies, and look for organic fabrics that have not been treated with pesticides. If you or your child suffers from allergies or asthma, use barrier covers for pillows and mattresses.

The Green Nest Pick: [Natural Rubber Crib Mattress](#), \$398

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The Nursery Carpet

Problem: Babies like to crawl on the carpet, but carpets can harbor millions of microorganisms and can outgas dangerous chemicals. VOCs can be found in the carpet fibers, backing and adhesives, as well as in any stain- or water-resistant treatments that may have been applied.

Solution: Choose an all-natural, 100 percent biodegradable carpet made from 100 percent wool fibers and with no toxic adhesives. Or, choose natural and hard-surface flooring like wood, linoleum, cork (which insulates heat and sound), bamboo and natural fiber area rugs with a nonslip pad.

The Green Nest Pick: [Bio-Floor Custom Carpeting](#), starting at \$37.80 per square foot

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Nursery Electronics

Problem: Children are more vulnerable to electromagnetic waves, due to their skull thickness and developing bodies. High magnetic and electric fields can cause severe long-term illness, interfere with the body's immune system, and keep children from sleeping soundly.

Solution: Limit the use of electronics and wireless devices in and around the crib. Reduce electromagnetic radiation by using battery-powered clocks, and avoid wireless devices such as portable phones, cell phones and wireless baby monitors. Use an automatic-demand switch to turn off circuit breakers at night and to reduce the electric fields while you sleep.

The Green Nest Pick: [The Automatic Demand Switch](#), \$235

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Air Quality



Problem: Studies suggest that indoor air is two to five times more polluted than outdoor air. Products such as paints, lacquers, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials and furnishings can emit VOCs and gases into the air we breathe. Since babies breathe more air pound for pound than adults, their growing bodies should be a priority.

Solution: Remove airborne chemicals and gases with an indoor air purifier. Look for a four-stage filter that includes a medical-grade HEPA filter and activated military carbon cloth. You can also reduce biological contaminants like dust, mold, pollen and pet dander; use a HEPA vacuum cleaner; change your furnace filters every three months; and open your windows to bring in some fresh air.

The Green Nest Pick: [Baby's Breath](#), \$299.99

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Plastic Baby Bottles

Problem: According to recent studies, Bisphenol-A, a chemical found in some plastic baby bottles, can disrupt hormone function, cause hyperactivity and increased aggression, lead to impaired learning, alter the functioning of the immune system and is associated with obesity and diabetes.

Solution: Choose baby bottles and sippy cups that are free of Bisphenol-A or use glass bottles. Avoid plastic toys and bottles, which can leach endocrine-disrupting chemicals into liquid when they're heated or scratched. Look for the "Safer Plastic" label.

The Green Nest Pick: [The Bisphenol-A-Free Plastic Baby Bottles, \\$19.99](#)

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Bath Water

Problem: Fifty percent of chlorine intake occurs while bathing. Recent scientific studies have linked chlorinated water, over time, to conditions such as cancer of the bladder, liver, stomach and colon. Chlorine has also been found to increase the risk of asthma.

Solution: Use a chlorine filter like a bath ball or dechlorinating bath salts. For older children, a chlorine shower filter can be installed. Filters can also help eliminate odors, dirt and sediment that cause dry, itchy, flaky skin, brittle hair, and eye, lung and sinus irritation. Your bathtub filter will also keep your tub cleaner longer, as it reduces lime scale and mold and mildew deposits.

The Green Nest Pick: [Bath Ball Tub Filter](#), \$59.95

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Cleaning Products



Problem: Many cleaning products contain harsh chemicals and synthetic fragrances. The National Research Council estimates that less than 30 percent of the petrochemicals available for home use have been tested for their effects on human and environmental health. So you don't always know what chemicals are in cleaning products.

Solution: Use nontoxic, 100 percent biodegradable cleaning products. Avoid extra-strength cleaners, which may contain dangerous solvents, acids, caustic chemicals, bleach and ammonia. Mild, organic cleaners (such as unscented, general-purpose soaps and detergents) and homemade cleaners are also great choices.

The Green Nest Pick: [Green Nest All-Purpose Cleaner](#), \$9.95

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Pesticides

Problem: Pesticides are linked to many diseases, including childhood leukemia, and do not belong near small children, who may accidentally ingest them. Did you know that pesticides can remain in carpeting for up to 20 years?

Solution: Use nontoxic methods of pest control. Wipe your feet on a doormat or leave your shoes at the door to prevent tracking in pesticides on the bottom of your shoes. Choose organic-cloth toys and fabrics that do not contain harmful pesticides. A great rule of thumb is to keep trash to a minimum and seal cracks to limit pests from entering your home in the first place.

The Green Nest Pick: [Battle Ants & Roaches Puffer Bottle](#), \$11.95

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