



Cornell University  
College of Human Ecology

## Healthy Homes Video

Mold is just one of the allergens covered in an educational DVD, *Healthy Homes: Assessing Your Indoor Environment*, created by faculty in the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis. Additional biological pollutants, chemical contaminants, and safety hazards and concerns are targeted. Its purpose is to help consumers determine where improvements can be made in their homes to create a safer and healthier living environment.

*Healthy Homes* follows county Cornell Cooperative Extension educators on visits to two homes in need of help. In one, an elderly woman is concerned because a leaky furnace released carbon monoxide (before repairs were made), but she learns of other dangers lurking: radon and mold in the basement and lead in old paint where her grandchildren play. In the same town, an apartment-dwelling boy suffers with asthma. The extension educator soon discovers several asthma “triggers”: secondhand smoke from the father’s cigarettes, dander from the family dog, and cockroaches from a nearby restaurant.

Available in DVD format with English and Spanish language tracks, the video was commissioned by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control and supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Help Yourself to a Healthy Home* is an accompanying self-help booklet for parents and caregivers and is available in English, Spanish, Bosnian, Hmong, and Vietnamese.

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## Promoting Healthy Weights in Childbearing Women

Gaining more than the recommended amount of weight in pregnancy is consistently and positively related to high levels of weight retention in the post-pregnancy period and thus contributes to the development of obesity in women. “Promoting Healthy Weights in Childbearing Women” focuses on building the capacity of community-based health and nutrition professionals so they can design and implement environmental interventions to promote healthy weights in women and their infants.

The project is funded by a USDA National Research Initiative grant and involves multi-agency collaborations with CCE and WIC in an 8-county area of rural Upstate New York. A partnership of 42 community-based health and nutrition professionals and a coordinating committee are active in the Health Start Partnership.

Two environmental interventions include a new system of nutrition education for low-income pregnant women and a marketing campaign to improve the social acceptability of breastfeeding was conducted in the first three months of 2007 in one county.

The control cohort of 230 women has reached 6 months postpartum and completed the study. Recruitment of the intervention cohort is beginning. The research has already identified a relationship between excessive gestational weight gain in women and risk of overweight in their children at age 3 years.

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RESEARCH/OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS  
Human Health and Safety

## ACT for Youth

Assets Coming Together (ACT) for Youth is an initiative to foster optimum health and well-being for New York State youth. It is based on two themes:

- The most effective youth-serving programs take a positive approach to youth, promoting strengths and potential rather than focusing primarily on risky behaviors.
- In order to reach all youth and achieve long-term change, there must be an extensive shift in consciousness at all levels of government and in all community sectors—a transformation in the way adults view and interact with youth.

The ACT for Youth Center for Excellence is based in the college's Family Life Development Center and has been in existence since 2000. From its publication, *Lessons Learned From ACT for Youth: The First Five Years* (available at [www.actforyouth.net/](http://www.actforyouth.net/)), one selected outcome follows.

According to one participant, "The biggest change in our community is to even consider giving youth a voice." One of the most distinguishing features of the ACT for Youth model is its focus on policy change at the community level. More than any other youth development initiative put forth in the past few years, ACT for Youth aims to effect positive outcomes for youth by instituting policy changes reflecting youth development principles in schools and local government agencies. The ACT for Youth partnerships often serve as the catalyst for community change, advancing new attitudes about youth, providing training, and influencing schools and government—all of which are necessary precursors to broad, community-level change.

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## Maximizing Mineral Metabolism

In order to understand how minerals are metabolized by the body under situations of physiological stress or increased needs, research is exploring the nutritional effect of pregnancy – particularly in teenagers who become pregnant before they reach age 19. Mass spectrometry is used to learn about the absorption and metabolism of calcium, as well as iron, and zinc

Teenage mothers are still building much of their total bone mass during their adolescent years. The unborn baby's need to develop its skeleton may compete with the teenage mother's need for calcium to build her own bones, compromising her ability to achieve peak bone mass that will help protect her from osteoporosis later in life. It is not known whether adolescent mothers can regain lost bone after their pregnancy ends and/or they stop breastfeeding.

Researchers found that teens who consumed more calcium during pregnancy showed less bone loss when tested postpartum, compared to those with poor or average calcium intakes. They also found that a low calcium intake limits fetal bone growth in pregnant teens. Insufficient transfer of nutrients to the fetus during pregnancy could have life-long consequences for the offspring.

It is critical to understand the factors that affect the lifetime potential for bone health in both teenage mothers and their infants. This research has the potential to develop recommendations to ensure that girls get adequate calcium to prevent or minimize losses and avert any detrimental, long-term effects on bone growth.

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