

Creating Healthy Homes:

A Partnership between Tobacco Prevention and Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs

Children spend a significant amount of their time at home and they deserve for these spaces to be as safe as possible. **There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke.** Infants exposed to smoke are more likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and are at an increased risk for asthma.¹ According to the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, 35% of Androscoggin County middle school students live in a home where someone else smokes.



Photo: Jay Allen, landlord in Lewiston

Beyond smoking, lead exposure in the home can also put children at risk. **The cities of Lewiston and Auburn have the highest rate of childhood lead poisoning in the state.**² In Maine, almost 70% of childhood lead poisoning occurs in rental housing.² Lead poisoning in children causes brain damage that can result in learning and behavioral problems.² Both tobacco residue (also called "third-hand smoke") and lead dust accumulate on surfaces in the home where infants and children crawl and put items in their mouths, putting them at a particularly high risk.

For more than a year, Healthy Androscoggin has combined lead poisoning prevention and second-hand smoke exposure education efforts to create Healthy Homes, a neighbor to neighbor education initiative. This ongoing effort has led one of Healthy Androscoggin's coordinators to work with area landlords on lead abatement and adopting smoke-free housing policies. By utilizing one person who can provide technical assistance on both issues, landlords are able to receive simple, wraparound supports in developing safe housing.

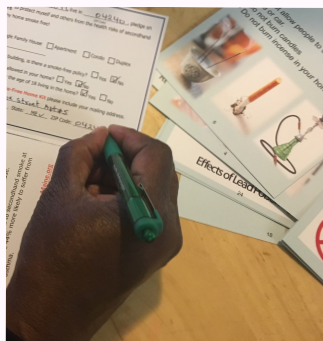


Photo: Resident completing Smoke-free home pledge as part of the Healthy Homes Education

"I was smoking at home before but because of what I have learned...now I smoke outside of my apartment." ~ Area resident who received education through the Healthy Homes initiative

Through this initiative, lead poisoning prevention education has been provided to **81** neighbors, impacting **278** area residents, while **5** landlords have passed smoke-free policies, covering a total of **17** buildings, **77** units, and **336** tenants. These tenants will now live in safer homes - homes that reduce their exposure to second-hand smoke and lead.

"I am glad to have been able to save the life of someone by successfully encouraging them to not smoke in the home anymore." ~ Tona SAMU, translated from Portugese

Contact Healthy Androscoggin for more information at info@healthyandroscoggin.org or 207-795-5990

References: 1. Breathe Easy <https://breathe easymaine.org/facts/tobacco/secondhand-and-thirdhand-smoke/>.
2. Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services. Update on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention in Maine 2018. A Report to the State of Maine Legislature Committee on Health and Human Services, January 2019

