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## Spring Cleaning – Safely

After a long winter for the New River Valley, the weather appears to have finally turned toward spring, bringing with it the rite of “spring cleaning” where we turn our attention to some of the larger and less frequent chores around our homes and property.

The New River Health District would like to remind you to be safe during this annual ritual.

By taking basic precautions and understanding potential risks, we hope you have a safe and productive spring.

**Personal protection:** Remember to wear clothing appropriate to the task. Wear gloves, goggles, hearing protection, and dust masks or respirators appropriate to the task.

**Read labels:** When working with any chemicals, be sure to read the manufacturer’s labels, and follow instructions when using the product.

**Ventilation:** Whether you are working with cleaning agents or simply working in dusty conditions, keeping the area well ventilated is essential.

**Personal hygiene:** Practice good personal hygiene during and after your chores. Thoroughly wash your hands and other exposed areas with warm, soapy water.

### When working with:

**Dust or cleaning bird droppings:** Consider wet cleaning and ventilation. By using a mop or wet cloth, you can avoid stirring up the dust and aerosolizing any contaminants. This helps reduce the risk of lead exposure, as well as certain animal-borne diseases such as histoplasmosis and psittacosis. Wear appropriate personal protection.

See [www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbb&bdrp.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hbb&bdrp.htm).

**Terrariums and similar pet habitats:** Reptiles and amphibians can carry salmonella, so it is important to wear personal protection and practice good personal hygiene after handling or cleaning up after them. Preferably, their habitats should be cleaned outside of the home. Children under 5 years should not be allowed to handle the pet or be involved in the clean-up.

See [www.cdc.gov/Features/salmonellafrogturtle/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/salmonellafrogturtle/).

**Dust contaminated with rodent urine and/or feces:** Ventilate the work area as much as possible and for at least 30 minutes before entering to work. Spray the affected area with a disinfectant or a mixture of bleach and water (1:10) and let soak for 5 minutes. Wear appropriate personal protection. Use a paper towel to pick up the urine and droppings and dispose of the waste in the garbage. After removal, disinfect items that might have been contaminated by rodents or their urine and droppings. See [www.cdc.gov/rodents/cleaning/](http://www.cdc.gov/rodents/cleaning/).

**Mold:** Wear appropriate personal protection. Clean mold off hard surfaces with a mixture of bleach and water (1:10). If the surface of the item is rough, scrub the surface with a stiff brush. Control moisture by eliminating sources of moisture and increasing ventilation.

See [www.emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/pdf/flyer-get-rid-of-mold.pdf](http://www.emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/pdf/flyer-get-rid-of-mold.pdf).

### Other things to consider:

**Proper storage:** Store cleaning agents out of reach of young children.

**Proper disposal:** If you have hazardous materials to dispose of such as aerosol cans, take them to a hazardous materials disposal site.

### Additional Resources:

- [www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/dee/otherzoonosis/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/dee/otherzoonosis/)
- [www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Zoonoses\\_Textbook/Assets/WASH\\_zoonotic\\_disease\\_prevention.pdf](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Zoonoses_Textbook/Assets/WASH_zoonotic_disease_prevention.pdf)
- [www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Zoonoses/index.php](http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Zoonoses/index.php)
- [www.epa.gov/mold/whattowear.html](http://www.epa.gov/mold/whattowear.html)
- [www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mold/cleanup.htm)

If you have questions about how to reduce your risks,  
contact your local health department at [www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/index.htm).