



# FLOORING AND CARPETING



## WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING FLOORING MATERIALS?

It is important to consider whether flooring materials contain or emit chemicals that are harmful to human health. Plywood laminate floors (including medium-density fiberboard, veneer flooring, and "engineered real wood" flooring) can emit high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the resins used to glue them together. VOCs are chemicals, such as formaldehyde, that readily evaporate into the air and can cause developmental effects on children. Another flooring material to avoid, if possible, is PVC tiling/vinyl. Vinyl tiles also emit VOCs, as well as phthalates, into the air.

## WHAT ARE SOME SAFER FLOORING MATERIALS?

Solid hardwood floors are safer than laminate wood floors. Other eco-healthy choices are bamboo and cork. However, these choices may be manufactured in a way that leads to exposure to toxic chemicals. If you are interested in tiles, linoleum tiling is a safer choice than vinyl (PVC) tiling. Ceramic floor tiles are another good choice because they are waterproof, which makes it unlikely for the surface to grow mold, mildew and allergens. When purchasing flooring materials, look at Floorscore® certified products or for UL GREENGUARD certification. These seals indicate that the flooring material has been tested for compliance with indoor air quality emissions standards.



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**GOLD**

## WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER ABOUT WALL-TO-WALL CARPETING?

Wall-to-wall carpeting provides a soft surface to cushion impacts and ease tumbles, but it can also trap pesticides, household cleaning residues, lead dust and dirt. Chemicals can off-gas from carpet and the adhesives used to hold carpet in place - these toxics can have negative impacts on children's developing bodies. Throughout their lifetime, carpets release VOCs and are likely to trap moisture, thus degrading indoor air quality.

When possible, avoid wall-to-wall carpet. For areas where softer surfaces are desirable, choose area rugs made out of natural fibers such as: wool, cotton, or hemp - these materials are naturally fire-resistant and contain fewer chemicals. Clean area rugs twice a year with biodegradable, 3rd party certified least toxic cleansers.



## WHAT IS THE SAFEST WAY TO INSTALL AND MAINTAIN FLOORING MATERIALS?

The actual process of installing flooring can affect indoor quality as well. Thus, it is crucial to pick a flooring material that is easy to install and requires little maintenance and repair over its lifespan.

Floating flooring is preferred, because adhesives are not necessary for installation. Nailing and stapling are other non-chemical installation techniques. However, if a flooring choice needs to be glued to the sub-floor, the use of a low or no-VOC adhesive is best.

Care should be taken with regard to finishing or sealing hardwood or cork flooring. Pre-finishing of the flooring should be done at the factory, and the sealing products selected should emit low or no-VOCs.



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