



## Housing and Health

The spaces we live in, impact our ability to live, learn, and grow. Housing can be a contributing factor to health issues like asthma, allergies, lead exposure and other chronic illnesses. Poor housing conditions like chipping/peeling paint, infestations, and holes in the walls can be detrimental to health. When maintaining a healthy home, keep these principles in mind:

**Dry:** A damp house provides a welcoming environment for mites, roaches, rodents, and molds.

**Clean:** Clean homes help reduce pest infestations.

**Pest-free:** Mice and cockroach droppings have been linked to asthma episodes in children.

**Safe:** Falls are the most frequent cause of home injuries to children, followed by injuries from objects in the home, burns, and poisoning

**Contaminant-free:** Lead, radon, pesticides, asbestos particles, and carbon monoxide can impact health.

**Ventilated:** Increasing the fresh air supply in a home improves respiratory health.

**Maintained:** This will avoid moisture and pest problems. Deteriorated lead-based paint in older housing is the primary cause of lead poisoning.

**Thermally controlled:** Long-term exposure to excessive heat or cold can impact health



## About Us

Women for a Healthy Environment (WHE) is a non-profit focused on how the built environment impacts public health. WHE educates individuals about environmental risks, provides action steps communities and individuals can take to mitigate those risks, and advocates for solutions that better protect the health of communities across southwestern PA. Through the Healthy Homes program, WHE provides tools and resources to create healthy spaces for families to live, learn, grow and play. The guide was created to give tenants a better understanding of their rights and protections to ensure safe and healthy housing.

### Contact Us

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### TENANT'S GUIDE TO HEALTHY HOUSING AND HABITABILITY

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**WOMEN**  
*for a Healthy*  
**ENVIRONMENT**  
*— Healthy Homes*

## Renter's guide to healthy housing

What every tenant needs to know about their rights to habitability





## Understanding Tenant Rights

As a tenant, you are entitled to live in an environment that is habitable and safe.

1. Your landlord cannot discriminate against you
2. Your landlord must give you notice to leave the residence unless you have signed a lease waiving your right to the notice
3. Your landlord cannot lock you out or shut off your utilities
4. Typically, your landlord cannot withhold your property from you after you have moved out

## Protections Under State Law

1. Under state law (Implied Warranty of Habitability and Repairs) every landlord in Pennsylvania must make the repairs needed to keep the rental house in a safe, sanitary and livable condition .
  - a. This includes only serious defects such as:
    - i. Leaking roof
    - ii. Dangerous wiring
    - iii. Broken floor
    - iv. Lack of water
  - b. If the landlord does not make the repairs, then the tenant has the right to repair and deduct the cost of repair from future payments to the landlord.

## Steps to Report a Housing Defect

Every landlord in Pennsylvania must make the repairs needed to keep the rental housing in a safe, sanitary and livable condition. This warranty applies for serious defects.

To protect your rights under the implied warranty law, you must complete the following steps:

### ***Step 1: Tell the landlord about the problem.***

Tell your landlord, in writing, what the problem is and what you plan to do about it. Keep a copy of the letter to prove that the landlord was notified.

### ***Step 2: Allow your landlord time to repair.***

The law gives your landlord a reasonable amount of time to make the repairs. The amount of time depends on the seriousness of the defect. If it is an emergency, the landlord is required to act quickly

### ***Step 3: Collect evidence to show that the landlord did not make repairs.***

It is important to give the landlord notice and to have evidence that the landlord did not make repairs. A copy of the letter sent to the landlord can be used as evidence; so can pictures, witnesses, or the report of a housing code inspector.

### ***Step 4: Repair and deduct.***

If the landlord does not make the repairs, you can repair and deduct. You should not repair and deduct for repairs that exceed the monthly rent. Seek legal help if the repair is costly.



## Resources

***Neighborworks*** Financial wellness and Homeownership resources  
Contact: 412-281-9773

***Community Justice Project*** Lead contamination and housing legal representation  
Pittsburgh Office: 412-434-6002

***Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh***  
Financial toolkit and resources for financial wellness  
Contact: 412-227-4802

***Urban Redevelopment Authority***  
Resources for homeowners  
Housing contact: 412-255-666

***Fair Housing Law Center***  
Housing discrimination law  
Contact: 1-877-725-447

***Neighborhood Legal Services***  
Understanding tenant protections and tangles title help  
Pittsburgh office: (412) 255-6700

***Allegheny County Health Department***  
Filing a housing code violation  
Contact: 412-350-4046

***LawHelp Interactive***  
Sample letters to landlords LawHelp.org  
LawHelp Interactive  
LawHelp.org