



A GREEN Bedroom

Healthy children, healthy planet

By Anne Bertino

Up until their late teens, children are still growing. Their body tissues metabolize faster than adults' and toxins are absorbed at a higher rate. With this in mind, it is alarming to note that, according to *Homes that Heal* by Athena Thompson, the use of synthetic chemicals in the household has increased since World War II and the rate of chronic disease has steadily increased. What does this mean for our children?

Children spend a high percentage of time in their bedrooms. Decisions made about the materials used in the bedroom, therefore, have a tremendous impact on children's health. From carpet to paint, the right choice is important.

From the Ground Up

Let's start with the floor. Children spend a lot more time on the floor than we as adults do. This said, you may think that carpet is the way to go; it's soft and warm and easy to clean (well, sort of). Think again. Carpets trap dust, pet dander and even chemical fumes from other objects in the home, plus pesticides and fertilizers tracked in on shoes. Carpet—especially cheap carpet—can contain a science lab's worth of chemicals, such as formaldehyde and benzene, both of which are classified as human carcinogens by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

All-natural cork is a great alternative to carpet. It is a rapidly renewable resource, and

soft and warm too! It can be installed without glue and protected with water-based, nontoxic sealers or old fashioned paste wax. It's anti-microbial, naturally water resistant and durable. You can also clean it easily with just a vacuum and damp mop.

Another healthy option for flooring is good old linoleum. Produced from natural renewable materials like linseed oil, rosins, wood flour and jute, linoleum is softer and warmer than tile, and you can choose to add an underlay that moves it pretty close to cork in softness. The neat thing about linoleum is all the colors and patterns. It's easy to create fun designs like a fish pond or a race track. Like cork, linoleum is easy to clean and anti-microbial.

With all this said about not using carpeting, an area rug over cork or linoleum is okay. A fun, cozy idea is to use area rugs in the winter and then roll them up for the summer months. You can even create an area rug of your own at www.interfaceflor.com. Available in many styles and colors, the best part may be that you can wash them in the sink! I even know someone who put them in the dishwasher. One trick: order them by the tile so you can replace just one tile if your washing muscle can't remove a stubborn Kool-Aid stain.

Air Up There

When it comes to walls and ceilings, there are so many planet-friendly paint options now

that I cannot imagine using anything else! Even the big companies all have an "eco" line of paint, but, as with everything, some products are better than others. There is a lot of information out there about which paints are better for the environment and you, but here are some basics to keep in mind ...

You'll want a paint that has low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC). VOCs are the solvents that stink. They are not good for the air in your home or for the planet's ozone layer. My favorite paint is from Yolo Colorhouse at www.yolocolorhouse.com. They have a limited palette, which makes it easier to choose, but they also have a special kids' line called Little Yolo. The paint is beautiful, goes on easily and doesn't smell one bit—it's zero VOC!

Although there are many other things to consider when making choices about your children's surroundings, flooring and paint are two primary elements to ensure a healthy, natural environment. By learning about eco-friendly materials and making smart decisions now, you can make a world of difference in your children's ongoing health and happiness!

** Anne Bertino is an allied member of ASID and owner of The Bertino-Baumann Design Group, an interior design firm specializing in people- and planet-friendly design. Visit www.thebbdgroup.com.*