

# Hidden Hazards in Older Homes

Contributed by Lance Mohr  
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When it comes to purchasing real estate, what you don't know can hurt you. Lurking behind every wall or crevice is an array of hidden home hazards that can jeopardize your health and wealth if you are unfortunate enough to buy a property plagued by these common problems. Use this handy checklist when viewing homes for sale and follow-up on any unknown items before making a final offer on any property.

**Lead:** Homes built prior to 1978 are likely to contain lead paint; a known neuro-toxin that can result in mental retardation among children and other severe health related issues. Real estate investors and landlords are required by law to notify tenants of the potential for lead paint which can result in higher vacancy rates among those with young children. Large fines or lawsuits have been associated with lead paint exposure. De-leading a home can be expensive so make sure you understand the full cost, responsibilities and other obligations required before buying an older Tampa home that contains lead paint. Closely related is the use of lead pipes in older construction. Lead was frequently used to solder pipes including those responsible for drinking water to the home. Lead can also be found in the soil.

**Water:** The quality of water can have a dramatic impact on the health and well-being of your entire family so it is a good idea to have the water tested and/or obtain a copy of the recent water testing results for community water systems.

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**Asbestos:** Older homes often contained asbestos shingles, insulation or other building materials. Asbestos is a known carcinogen that may also lead to respiratory problems, rash and other conditions.

**Mold:** Toxic mold and mildew have become big problems in many areas including hot, humid Florida. While many mold and mildew problems may result in health related issues, toxic mold is capable of causing severe illness in some individuals. Mold and mildew is spread by spores which can hide in air vents, basements, furniture or even carpeting after a flood or other water related damage including leaking roof. In fact, mold or mildew may remain long after the original repair has taken place so a thorough inspection is required.

**Radon:** Radon is a gas capable of causing headaches, fatigue and other health complaints. It is odorless and invisible so the use of a radon detector is required to measure the presence and severity of radon in the home. Newer homes that are tightly weatherized and lack proper ventilation can lead to an increase in radon exposure.

In addition to having a complete appraisal and home inspection, take time to perform additional testing for lead, asbestos, radon and mold especially before purchasing older homes.