

# Choose Safe Places for Childcare Centers

The Virginia Department of Health is working in partnership with the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, and federal agencies to provide guidance for childcare professionals when selecting a site for those intending to provide childcare. This program aims to protect children from potential exposures to harmful chemicals including radon, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), lead, arsenic, mercury, and pesticides by helping providers identify sites where environmental health hazards are not known to exist.



## Harmful chemicals

We use chemicals every day to help us grow food, control pests, drive cars, and manufacture new products. But some of these chemicals can be dangerous. Chemicals in the air we breathe, water we drink, or things we touch can potentially cause harm. Also, children are usually more sensitive to chemical exposure than adults. Keep children safe by considering chemical hazards before you commit to a location.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SERVICES



*To protect the health and promote the  
well-being of all people in Virginia.*



## Chemicals from previous uses of the property

What was the property used for in the past? Dangerous chemicals might still be in the building, soil, or water. Many uses like factories, warehouses, farms, and dry cleaners can leave chemicals behind. Even a previous owner who smoked inside can leave chemicals behind on walls and carpets.



## Chemicals from nearby businesses, highways, and railroads

Are there nearby businesses using chemicals? If the building shares a ventilation system with a business like a nail salon, children could be exposed to high levels of chemicals in the air. Underground storage tanks from a gas station could leak and expose children to gasoline in playground soils. Chemicals being moved in trucks or railcars could spill in an accident. Chemicals in soil can seep up into indoor air.

## Chemicals used in construction

Before 1978, lead was used in some paints in the United States. We know now that lead can cause brain damage, especially in young children. Asbestos, a material that can cause lung cancer, was widely used in construction before 1977 and is still in limited use today. Removing or fully enclosing materials containing lead or asbestos will help keep children safe.



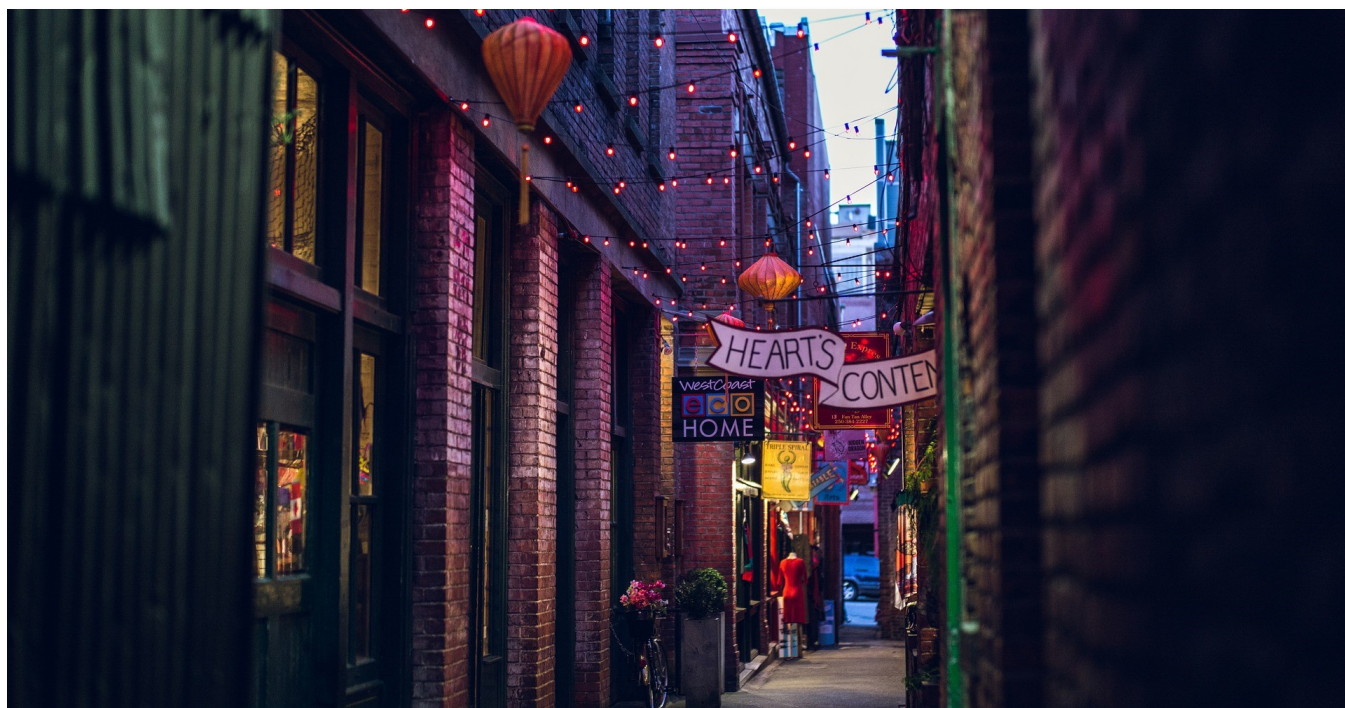
## Naturally occurring chemicals

Some chemicals, like arsenic and radon, occur naturally in certain areas underground. Radon is a radioactive gas that you can't see or smell but can cause lung cancer. Radon can enter a building through the foundation. Arsenic can become dissolved in drinking well water.

## Choose a Safe Place for Your Childcare Center

By participating in a voluntary screening process of the previous use of the building and property where your proposed childcare center is located, VDH can help you make an informed decision whether a location is safe for use as a childcare facility.

To request VDH to search for environmental hazards known to exist at or near a potential childcare facility site, please fill out our survey at <https://is.gd/virginiasafesiting> or call (804) 864-8182.



### Legal Disclaimer

Responses to the questionnaire are provided as general guidance only and to increase overall safety awareness. This information is not intended to constitute legal or medical advice and you should use it at your own risk. VDH accepts no responsibility or liability for damages arising from use of this information. If a more thorough investigation of the property is warranted, the user should seek the advice of appropriate professionals. VDH does not make any warranty, express or implied; assume any legal liability for the accuracy, completeness, or usefulness of any information herein; represent that its use would not infringe privately owned rights; nor assume any liability with respect to the use of, or for damages resulting from the use of any information, method, or process disclosed in this publication.