

The Room-By-Room Audit

A practical guide from Dr. Nicola Schmitz

How To Use This Audit

Print this document and walk through your home with it, room by room, over the course of a weekend. The goal is not to make you anxious about your house. The goal is to give you a clear picture of where your daily exposures are concentrated, so you can adjust the few things that matter most.

The principle that governs everything is cumulation. A single exposure rarely matters. Daily exposures, repeated for years, are what shape biology. The point is to find your repeated patterns, not to chase perfection.

THE KITCHEN

Water. What do you drink water from? Glass, stainless steel, or plastic? Is your tap water filtered? If you buy bottled water, what is it stored in?

Cookware. Look at your most-used pans. How many are non-stick with a coated surface? Is there an air fryer with a coated basket you use frequently? Do you have cast iron, stainless steel, ceramic, or glass alternatives?

Food storage. What do you store leftovers in? Plastic containers or glass? What do you heat leftovers in? Plastic in the microwave, or glass and ceramic? Do you wrap hot food in plastic film?

Highest-leverage adjustments. Install a good water filter. Store filtered water in glass. Replace your most-used non-stick pan with cast iron or stainless steel. Replace plastic food storage with glass or ceramic, especially for anything you heat. Stop using plastic wrap on hot food.

THE BATHROOM

Personal care, the daily items. Pick up each product you use every day. Body lotion: any phthalates listed as fragrance or parfum? Parabens? Face cream: leave-on, applied daily, for years? Deodorant: aluminum compounds? Synthetic fragrance? Toothpaste, hair care: what is on the labels?

Sunscreen, the special case. Is sunscreen part of your daily routine, year-round? Are the active ingredients chemical (octinoxate, oxybenzone, avobenzone) or mineral (zinc oxide, titanium dioxide)? Are you applying it to large areas of skin every day? How much sun exposure are you getting without it?

Makeup. Foundation, lipstick, mascara. What are the ingredient lists? Are you wearing makeup daily, including products that stay on skin for hours?

Highest-leverage adjustments. Audit your daily leave-on products first. Replace the worst. Reconsider daily chemical sunscreen use, move to mineral sunscreen for extended exposure, and

allow sensible daily sun exposure for vitamin D. Switch your deodorant to one without aluminum.

THE BEDROOM

Air and ventilation. Do you ventilate your bedroom daily, particularly in the morning? Any history of moisture damage in this room, the adjacent bathroom, or rooms above and below? Visible mold or persistent damp smells? Scented candles, plug-ins, or strongly perfumed laundry products?

Mattress and bedding. How old is your mattress? New when you got it, or used? Bedding: natural fibers (cotton, linen, wool) or synthetic blends? Carpets in the room, particularly synthetic?

Electromagnetic environment. Where does your phone sleep at night? Within arm's reach of your head? On airplane mode? Wi-Fi router within a few meters of your bed? Bluetooth devices used many hours per day? Digital clock or electronics close to your head?

Highest-leverage adjustments. If you suspect moisture damage, get the room inspected. Move your phone at least one meter from your head, or set it to airplane mode. Set the router on a timer to turn off at night. Remove scented candles, plug-in air fresheners, and strongly perfumed products from the room.

LIVING AND WORKING SPACES

Indoor air quality. Do you open windows regularly, even briefly? Carpets, particularly synthetic, that may release compounds over time? Candles, fireplaces, or other indoor combustion?

Cleaning products. What do you clean with? Aerosols, strong fragrances, or simpler products? Do you use chlorine bleach in small enclosed spaces? Scented products that linger in the air for hours?

Furniture and decor. Is any of your furniture new in the last few years, and still off-gassing? Synthetic rugs or carpets? Printers, copy machines, or other equipment that release particles when used?

Highest-leverage adjustments. Open windows daily, even just for fifteen minutes. Switch cleaning products to unscented. Avoid aerosols. Ventilate aggressively if you have new furniture or carpets. Remove plug-in air fresheners.

HABITS THAT CROSS ROOMS

Tattoos and cosmetic procedures. If you have these or are considering them, the cumulation principle applies. Occasional is different from habitual. Permanent makeup. Regular gel or acrylic manicures. Eyelash extensions or glue regularly.

Smoking and vaping. Do you smoke? This is the highest-leverage health change available to you. Do you vape? The long-term safety is not yet established. Are you exposed to second-hand smoke at home?

Habits in the car. Cars are small enclosed spaces where you spend significant time. Air fresheners? Is the car ventilated, or do you re-circulate air? If older, does the interior off-gas in heat?

WHAT TO DO WITH WHAT YOU FOUND

Quick changes, low or no cost. Items you can address in a single weekend. Personal care products. Phone position at night. Opening windows. Cleaning products. Start here. The cumulative effect of several quick changes is often larger than people expect.

Medium investments. A water filter system. Replacing the most-used cookware. Replacing food storage containers. Tackle these over the coming months.

Larger projects. Mold inspection and remediation. Replacing furniture. Moving in some cases. These are real, but they should not stop you from doing the quick changes first.

Final perspective. Do not try to do everything at once. A person who makes three changes per month for six months ends up in a meaningfully different position. The body responds to direction of travel.

From Alter Health: The Epigenetic Code. New episodes every Tuesday. Dr. Nicola Schmitz