



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte-Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

July 26, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeannine Mallory, Public Information Officer
Pinellas County Health Department
727-824-6908 (media only)

Renters Beware:
Check for Health Hazards Before Signing a Lease

Most homeowners – through their mortgage companies – have a home inspection before buying a home. Through this inspection, prospective homeowners can learn about potential health hazards, among other things. Unfortunately, renters do not have the benefit of seeing a home inspection report. The good news is that there are things you can do to check for health hazards in the rental house or apartment before you sign a lease.

For apartments, check the outside area for cracks in the walls, sidewalks and other common areas. For rental houses, check to see if the exterior walls have visible cracks, holes, broken gutters or exposed wiring. You're looking for areas where mold could grow and for areas that might pose a safety hazard.

Go inside and do a "sniff test." If you detect a "dirty socks" smell or musty odor, beware. Ask to see the air handler. If the air handler is in the attic, you won't be able to see it. If it's inside the house or apartment, look at the cooling coils, which are just behind the filter. The cooling coils look something like a car radiator with fins. If there is material between the "fins," it could be mold.

Also look at the ceilings and walls in bathrooms and utility closets for surface irregularities (recent patches, etc.). This could be an indication of a leak. Look for stains in ceilings and walls. Check for tight-fitting windows and doors. Check for cracked tile grout around showers and tubs. If there are cracks, water can leak inside the wall and cause mold growth.

For information about indoor air quality, please call the Pinellas County Health Department's Environmental Health Division at (727) 507-4336, extension 1336.

###

www.PinellasHealth.com