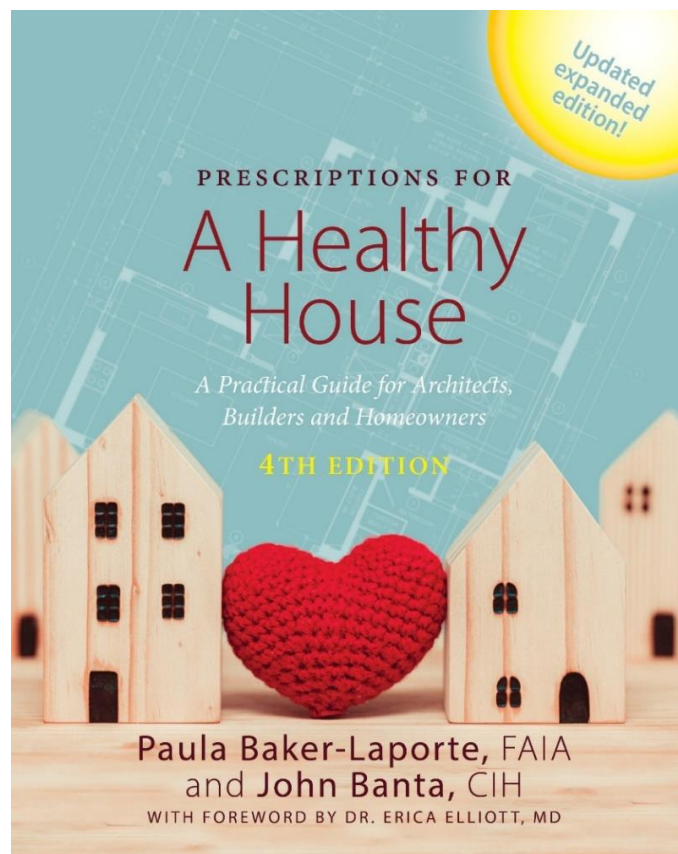


PRESCRIPTIONS FOR A Healthy House

A Practical Guide for Architects, Builders and Homeowners

eBook Introduction (from excerpts)

See the full Table of Contents [here](#).



With grateful acknowledgement to co-author John Banta, the EcoNest Architecture team, and the many expert contributions to this new edition.



EcoNest® Architecture Inc.
Healthy Home Design & Consulting

“A leap forward in rethinking the way we design and build (or remodel) our individual spaces. Who could argue with creating homes that support human health, the natural environment, and planetary ecology in one fell swoop?”

*Michael Conn
Executive Director, Building Biology Institute*

“I’m so glad that *Prescriptions for a Healthy House* is providing people with the knowledge to design, build and maintain a healthy home that promotes optimal brain function and overall good health.”

Annie Hopper, Author of Remapping the Brain to Recover from Chronic and Mysterious Illnesses



If you are reading this book (this e-book provides excerpts), it is most likely because you have joined the growing segment of the population with a special interest in creating the healthiest possible environment for you and your family. Perhaps you already know or suspect that the average home is not as healthy as it could and should be. Although almost anyone, when given a choice, would opt for a healthy environment to live in, few take the time to research what is involved, assuming that most builders and building designers already would know how to do this.

You may be surprised to learn that you are a pioneer, and that there will be some obstacles to overcome to reach your goal. Here are some of those obstacles:

- Building for deep health is not the current standard of the construction industry.
- The homeowner, who is dependent on the expertise of their architect and builder may often receive incorrect information from them.
- There is a dearth of concise information.
- Even if healthy materials and practices are specified there must be diligence on the part of the construction team in carrying them out.

By Building Biology standards, a home that nurtures health is not only free of toxins and synthetic materials. It also achieves a natural balance of ionization, reduces the influence of human-caused electromagnetic fields, avoids building over naturally occurring geopathic disturbances, and much more. Building Biology recognizes the genius of nature and upholds the natural environment as the standard for a vital healthy human environment.

In comparison, current building practices with the synthetic materials fail to create environments that measure up.



IS A “GREEN” HOME THE SAME AS A HEALTHY HOME?

Well... not necessarily. Unfortunately, a “green” home certification is not a guarantee that a home will support the health of its occupants, especially the growing segment of the population with health conditions such as multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS), electro-hyper-sensitivity (EHS), mold sensitivities, allergies, the elderly, anyone with a compromised immune system, and children.

The creation of a healthy home involves much more than applying non-toxic finishes and having a dependable mechanical air supply. Although an energy efficient home with careful construction detailing is a good start, there are many more factors to consider in order to create a home that deeply nurtures health.



BUILDING FOR MCS, EHS, AND MOLD SENSITIVITY

Creating a home that surpasses the conventional standards for health is not too difficult. For a person faced with severe chemical, biological and/or electrical sensitivities, building a home that they can move right in to is a much more challenging endeavor.

There is no single formula that can universally meet the needs of all people who suffer from these conditions and yet for many having a home that they can live safely in is the one thing they require most to regain their health and live productive and happy lives.

Each person with extreme sensitivities is unique. Understanding the cause of illness, if known, can be helpful in determining areas where extraordinary caution must be exercised. For example, someone who is sensitive only to electromagnetic radiation may prefer and tolerate properly installed and vented gas appliances while someone who has been injured through an exposure to combustion byproducts would be better off with electric appliances.

Another example of individual sensitivity is tolerance to wood. Wood can have many benefits for the well-being of occupants. Unsealed or naturally waxed or oiled wood allows for sound absorption improving acoustics, has some ability to balance ambient

moisture content and promotes good ion balance. However, for someone sensitive to wood terpenes, exposed wood can render a space uninhabitable.

While some sensitive people have a heightened sense of smell and react immediately to substances that are harmful to them, others have lost all sense of smell and have delayed reactions to exposures. Many of our clients have had years of inadvertent experimentation in their search for somewhere to live and have gained tremendous insight into what does and doesn't work for them. When one member of a family has sensitivities, the family may be faced with the need to build or remodel to that person's more demanding requirements.



NECESSITY FOR A TEAM WITH A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Setting realistic expectations at the outset of any project is very important and often very disconcerting to someone struggling with environmentally induced chronic illness.

The process of designing and building a home is a very complex one. The architect is charged with putting the Owner's intent on paper, the builder is in charge of pricing and building what the architect has drawn and the Owner is responsible for paying for it all and making a myriad of decisions. There is a delicate dance between the size, cost, and quality of the construction. Most Owners have a budget and expectation of what will be built for their budget.

In building a home for someone with environmental illness, who may feel unwell, whose very survival may depend on the outcome and who will require non-conventional materials and protocols, new layers of complexity are added. What is crucial to the success of such a project is a dedicated team with a common vision. There must be the skill and commitment



to work together collaboratively and respectfully.

The Owner, who is the expert in their own sensitivities, must be a more integral part of the process and be willing to test and determine best choices in a timely manner that does not hold up the schedule.

The team may be expanded to caregivers, medical professionals and several consultants who are experts in various aspects of healthy housing from materials specification to testing and commissioning.

Although this all sounds impossibly daunting, Paula has seen many new build projects for environmentally sensitive clients go very smoothly and successfully despite the many hurdles.

PAULA BAKER-LAPORTE, FAIA, BBNC

Paula is an architect, Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, Building Biologist, author, healthy building consultant and educator. Graduating from the University of Toronto School of Architecture in 1978 and from the Institute of Building Biology and Ecology in 1994, Paula founded her own award-winning architectural practice in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 1986-2009, and founded EcoNest Architecture Inc. in Ashland, Oregon in 2010.



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