

Fact Sheets for Families

Indoor Air Quality in Your Home

Why is indoor air quality a concern for young children?

The quality of the air inside of our homes, schools and child care settings can have harmful effects on the health and comfort of infants and children. Young children are more vulnerable to the effects of poor air than adults because they are growing and developing; they breathe in more air in proportion to their body weight; and they spend much of their time playing on the floor where pollutants can gather and become airborne.

What are the health risks to children who breathe poor quality air?

Some short-term health risks that may result from indoor air pollutants are headache, nausea, dizziness, infection, and irritation of the eyes, nose, and respiratory tract. Possible long-term effects include asthma, allergies, lung disease, cancer and neurological damage. Indoor air pollutants may also trigger asthma and allergy episodes.

What causes indoor air pollution?

There are many possible sources of indoor air pollution. Look around your home to see if any of these might be putting pollutants into the air that your children breathe:

- Mold, dust, pet dander, cat saliva, pollen, rodent waste, cockroaches
- Gas stoves, wood-burning fireplaces, kerosene heaters
- Fumes from solvents, cleaning agents, air fresheners, cosmetics and perfumes, oven and rug cleaners, wood finishes, paints

- Dust from lead paint
- Fumes from new consumer products such as carpeting and upholstery
- Bacteria and viruses
- Pesticides
- Tobacco smoke

How can the air quality in your home be improved?

- Remove the source of the pollution.
- Control moisture by removing moist vapor, standing water and water damaged materials.
- Vacuum, damp mop, and clean regularly to control dust and other contaminants.
- Provide ventilation in your home, by opening windows and safely using fans.
- Maintain your heating and air-conditioning systems. Do not use kerosene space heaters.
- Use proper dilutions for cleaning products and keep them out of the reach of children.
- Clean up after pets.
- Monitor rodent and insect infestations.
- Seal cracks in the walls and floors and keep food in sealed containers to discourage infestation.
- Use pesticides only as a last resort.
- Have a “no smoking” policy in your home.



California Childcare Health Program
UCSF School of Nursing
cchp.ucsf.edu
2006