



NASN

National Association of School Nurses

Cleaning for Healthier Schools - What School Nurses Need to Know

Green Cleaning for schools protects public health without harming the health of staff, building occupants and the environment. The best way to reduce cleaning chemical exposures for students and staff is to implement a cleaning for healthy schools program.

Health Benefits For All

- Reduced Allergies and sensitivities
- Reduced Absenteeism
- Increased productivity
- Higher test scores

Ingredients in common cleaning products have been linked to

- Triggering asthma episodes
- Cancer
- Effects on the nervous system, reproductive organs, kidneys, liver and hormones

Asthma and Allergy Triggers

- Dust
- Pesticides
- Chemicals and toxins
- Mold
- Pollen
- Animal Dander
- VOC's (Volatile organic compounds)

Disinfecting vs Sanitizing – know the difference

- **Disinfecting** destroys or inactivates microbes life and should be used where required and in high risk areas
- **Sanitizing** reduces microorganisms to safe levels and is often sufficient for food prep areas and in child care for diapering areas

School Nurse Role: Green cleaning in schools

- Elimination – not using chemicals where possible
- Substitution – replacing one substance or activity with a less hazardous one
- Engineering – using ventilation or other mechanical means to reduce exposure
- Administrative – policies, procedures and training



Advocate to

- Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides
- Use only third party certified green cleaning products
- Reduce the presence of chemical hazards, such as mercury in schools
- Improve indoor air in school design, construction, and school siting/location.

Goal

Ensure that every child has a healthy school, clean, quiet, well-lit, and dry with good indoor air quality. Also needed is an administration that swiftly address such hazards as lead, PCBs, molds, asbestos, pest infestations, and chemical spills consistent with IAQ Tools for Schools Program.

Identify recognized third party certifiers of green cleaning products

Schools, communities and agencies can rely on independent third-party certifiers (such as EcoLogo or Green Seal) to assure that products meet specific, publicly available 'green' and 'healthy' criteria

Cleaning for Healthy Schools—simple first steps—prevent dirt and pests

- Keep walks/ parking areas clean & swept/shoveled so shoes stay clean & dry
- Place walk-off mats at each major entrance
- Provide cubbies/lockers for personal items with regular locker clean out days
- Restrict all snacks and food to one or two designated areas in the building
- Ban pets in classrooms, keep classroom plants away from air supply
- Keep tightly sealed garbage cans/recycling bins away from the fresh air intakes
- Keep cans and dumpsters clean
- Use durable, hard surface easy-to-clean materials for floors and walls.
- Ban new or used upholstered furniture
- Keep classroom clutter down, leave classrooms ready to clean
- Children can help tidy up, but should never be required to use hazardous cleaning products
- Ban cleaning products brought from home
- Give teachers nontoxic cleaning materials for quickly wiping up small spills
- Maintain heating/ventilating system to reduce/eliminate airborne contaminants such as bacteria, dusts, molds

Breathe easier – clean does not have an odor

Barnett, C. (2010). How to Achieve Healthy School Environments. NASN School Nurse, 25: 82-86.

Healthy Schools Network, Inc. <http://www.healthyschools.org/>

Cleaning for Healthy Schools Toolkit <http://www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org/>

NASN Environmental Health Materials & Training Tools <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=483>

