

TIPS FOR SCHOOL STAFF

Promoting Healthy Schools

There are some things that nurses, teachers, and other personnel can do to help improve the indoor air quality in their classrooms and school. Recognizing that proper building maintenance is a school department function, there are some suggestions that we'd like to offer to help enhance those efforts.

Locate your ventilation unit. Find out if it is working and bringing fresh air into your classroom. Don't obstruct your vent with books, supplies, furniture or dust. Try not to turn it off, even if it's a bit noisy. If it's not working, ask your custodian to fix it and also inquire when the filters were last changed.

Avoid bringing pets, plants, rugs and fuzzy objects into the classroom. Pets have dander. Plants have spores and their soil breeds mold. Rugs and fuzzy objects retain dust mites, molds and odors. These are allergens and asthma triggers.

Avoid using chemicals. Do not bring in your own cleaning products, especially aerosol sprays and air fresheners. Ask your facilities manager to look into buying environmentally preferable cleaning products. Use odorless, water-based markers and art supplies. Staff and students should also refrain from wearing fragrances. These can be respiratory irritants.

Report hazards and water leaks as soon as they appear. Make sure they get fixed. Dampness always leads to mold problems.

Clean up food and drinks carefully. Crumbs and liquids attract pests. Keep food in closed containers if they must be stored. Use covered garbage cans. Encourage the practice of children cleaning out desks, lockers, and cubbies to get rid of any food-related garbage. Better yet, have them eat in the cafeteria. Don't spray pesticides: they are too toxic to use around kids.

Refrain from storing materials in cardboard containers. Paper products get moldy and dusty and provide nesting for roaches and ants. Use plastic or metal.

Consider establishing an Environmental Health and Safety Committee or Green Team in your school. Use EPA's IAQ [Tools for Schools](#) as a basic guide and make sure to include parents!