


## Indoor air quality management guidelines

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As more homeowners accepted the need to properly seal their home to improve energy efficiency, the resulting effect was a dramatic reduction in domestic air quality. Replacing your home's heating and cooling system can be very costly, but there are ways to help improve indoor air quality without going into such costs. For existing systems, it is best to replace air filters with a two- or even three-fold filter. With these new filters, microorganisms, gases and even dust particles can now be controlled by airborne droplets. Although many of these filters are not always available in all hardware stores, they can be purchased online. Be sure to look for high-density carbon or polycarbon in the description of the object. You can also improve the air quality in your home by using these filters in conjunction with a stand-alone room ionizer. To improve indoor air quality in your home: Install a high-quality air filter on your heating/cooling system. Choose low or no VOC products when buying flooring, cabinets, or paint. Add more houseplants to help filter airborne pollutants. Watch this video to find out more. published on 08/04/2017 by Sarah D. Young reporter and photo editor (c) HaywireMedia - FotoliaIn effort to keep your family healthy, you try your best to keep the house clean. But in order to prevent symptoms such as sniffing, sneezing, and itchy eyes, you may need to do more than dust and scrub surfaces. According to Broan experts, homeowners should also be mindful of airborne hazards that could pose a health risk. In a recent survey, a ventilation manufacturer found that while most homeowners know that unhealthy indoor air can cause health problems, many do not recognize signs of poor indoor air quality. Signs of poor indoor air quality We spend up to 90 percent of our time indoors; our home should be our sanctuary. However, too often, homeowners overlook warning signs of poor indoor air quality, attributing it instead to everything from asthma to colds, says Michelle Gross, senior global director of the channel's marketing, services and digital technologies. A few signs that the air in your home may not be clean as it may include: mold, chemical odors, misty windows and mirrors, and the lingering smell of cooking. Contributions to poor indoor air quality include the use of a fireplace, running central heating and cooling systems, cooking frequently, or lighting candles. Having a bathroom fan or hood range can also negatively affect indoor air quality, says Broan.Ways to improve indoor airflow is vital to achieving and maintaining healthy air quality, says home improvement expert Danny Lipford. Bath fans and range hoods are the easiest way to dramatically improve indoor air quality, he said. The key is to use them every time you shower or cook, leave them for 10 minutes You're done and replace them every 10 years. To help homeowners improve indoor air quality, Broan recommends the following tips: Install a fan or hood. For optimal ventilation, your kitchen should have a hood range and your bathroom should have the appropriate fan size. Be sure to use fans every time after cooking and showering. Follow the 10-minute rule. Run your hood range for at least 10 minutes after cooking to eliminate lingering odors and particles. Do the same after a shower to remove moisture. Clean it up monthly. For maximum efficiency, clean range of hoods and bathroom fans once a month. Replace as needed. Most range hoods have a long lifespan of about 10-12 years, but be sure to change bathroom fans when they no longer prevent your mirror from fogging. Clean regularly. Wash your underwear often in hot water, vacuum regularly (making sure not to forget the doormats), and remove the shoes when entering the house. Planes, power plants and smoky, traffic-clogged cities may be what we imagine when we think about air pollution, but few people know that the air quality in your home can be up to 10 times worse than outside. In fact, the UK government considers air pollution - both in and out of the air - to be the biggest environmental health risk, contributing to almost 40,000 deaths a year, of which at least 9,000 are linked to indoor air pollution. The Environmental Audit Committee estimates that NHS and social care spending on air pollution amounts to more than 20 billion euros a year. What determines poor indoor air quality? Indoor air pollution may be worse in major cities, due to higher levels of outdoor pollution filtering into homes, but it affects those who live in the country too. The British Lung Foundation defines indoor air pollution as dust, dirt or gases in the air inside a building that harms us if we inhale it. This can be caused by many things, from poor ventilation and dampness to chemicals in cleaning products and paints. It consists of tiny particles that are not usually visible or smell, ominously branding it an invisible killer. The average person spends more than 90% of their time indoors, inhaling contaminated indoor air for more than 150 hours a week. What's more, our homes are more insulated and less ventilated than ever, which has a positive effect on our electricity bills but negatively affects air quality as dry, stale air hangs longer. What are the effects of indoor air pollution? The idea that our homes are polluted sounds scary, and it is so, but a lot of pollution is normal and inevitable, only becomes a problem when it is not taken seriously and allowed to build. Some people may not experience symptoms at all, but that doesn't mean we don't have to all take a closer look at our habits at home, especially when it comes to cleaning, ventilation and aerosol use. Aerosols. Stephen Holgate, medical adviser at the British Lung Foundation, said: While we have learned a lot about how outdoor air pollution is damaging our health and that of our children, we know too little about the air we breathe in our homes, cars and schools. Everyone is at risk from indoor air pollution, but children and people living with lung disease are more likely to be affected by poor air quality. If you breathe in contaminated air for days or weeks at a time, you may start noticing a dry throat or cough. You can also feel shortness of breath, wheezing or itchy or runny nose. It is important that our homes adopt a more cautious approach to chemicals, that products are labelled as food, that personal choices can be made, and that attention is paid to measuring indoor pollution and ensuring the adequacy of ventilation. The World Health Organization estimates that 4.3 million people worldwide died from indoor air pollution in 2012, of which 99,000 were in Europe, with patients suffering from serious respiratory and cardiovascular diseases such as lung cancer and heart disease. 11 EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE AIR QUALITY IN YOUR HOME 1. Open the windowsIt may seem obvious, but keeping your airflow fresh is the cheapest and easiest way to improve your home's air quality. Opening windows in winter may seem counterintuitive when you're trying to stay warm and save money on central heating, but it's vital to putting oxygen and nasties out, as well as reducing the humidity that dust mites need to survive. Be especially careful to keep the rooms well ventilated when using chemically heavy cleaning or decorating products. Buying a rest of the furniture over the newThat new sofa may be a luxury, but it's secretly releasing chemicals into your living room. Volatile organic compounds, known as VOCs, are gases emitted by many tissues, adhesives and paints. They react with sunlight and chemicals in the atmosphere to form particles that irritate and damage our lungs.Combat is digging and delving into a charity shop that sells furniture such as the British Heart Foundation, or Scout from Freecycle or Gumtree for freebies or deals near you. The elements stop emitting VOCs after a few years, which means they are most likely gas from someone else's home. The same logic applies to flooring. Ideally, swap the carpet for floorboards or concrete, both of which are easier to clean and do not trap dust and dander. If you've just moved into a new building house and want to absorb some VOCs, Ikea has just launched its first air-cleaning curtains. Developed in With leading universities and priced at just 25 pounds, they are processed with a special mineral coating that helps to break down odors and chemicals in the air when activated by a light source. Invest in air purifierIndus and pollen pollen can be microscopic. It's almost impossible to clean up what you can't see. Enter the air purifier. The best air-cleaning machines trap and remove almost 100% pollutants by drawing in dirty air, filtering it and releasing it back into the room, much cleaner and fresher. Air purifiers can prove particularly useful during the peak hay fever season from May to July and usually have LED displays that flash green when the surrounding air is clean. Some release negative ions into the air to help neutralize viruses and airborne bacteria. Look for air purifiers with a high CADR (clean air delivery level). The higher the number, the faster the device will filter the air. If your budget extends far enough, invest in an air purifier with a fan, so that newly clean air is circulating throughout the room. Smaller, less expensive air purifiers can still be effective, but you will need to move them around if you use them in larger rooms. Dr Rob Hicks, physician and author of Beat Your Allergies, says: While it is difficult to control the outdoor environment, taking steps to reduce contact with allergens indoors is an effective way to help reduce asthma attacks and alleviate allergy symptoms. Removing airborne droplets, such as pet dander and pollen, can help reduce the risk of asthma attacks or allergy outbreaks, so an air purifier can be a very useful addition to your allergy control arsenal. 4. Don't forget dustGood quail vacuum cleaners are expensive, but they are a powerful force against the dust, pollen and hair of pets, all of which can quickly create and irritate the respiratory system. Vacuum as regularly as you can, including under sofas and beds. Bash pillows, carpets and throws against the outside walls to reduce how much dust they hold. Change bedding weekly and wash it at 60 degrees to kill dust mites and germs. Keep surfaces free from interference with frequent dust and use a damp cloth to catch these pesky particles. Give your closet cleaning green makeoverCleaning your home objectively a good thing. Or at least it would be, there were bleach and other products in your cleaning closet not toxic to breathe in. Fortunately, you don't need to use toxic ingredients to cut through the fat and dirt as a lot of eco-friendly cleaning products work just as well and smell much better. Look for foods that contain food ingredients such as coconut oil and without flavor or scented with aromatherapy oils. Bonus points if they are certified like The Greenscents or approved by a trusted organisation such as Allergy UK. Natural alternatives to consider include castile soap, which is made from vegetable oils and great at removing fat, vinegar to clean the glass, olive oil for polishing steel and diluted lemon juice to get hard stains from the cutting boards. To effectively clean anything but tap water, choose reusable microfiber tissues that trap tiny dirt particles when wet. They also do not store bacteria, preventing cross-contamination between the bathroom surface and the kitchen. If you still doubt the cleaning abilities of environmentally friendly products, Professor Holgate recommends swapping chemical sprays for solid or liquid cleaning products. Sprays get into the air, which means you can breathe them in more easily and they can get further down into the airways, he says. 6. Dry wet dust mites, mold and viruses like heat and moisture, making kitchens and bathrooms their havens of choice. Take care to keep the door closed while taking a hot shower, cover the pan, turn on the extractor fan to get rid of the steam and hang the wet clothes until dry outside. Open the windows as much as possible to prevent condensation creation, especially during sleep. If humidity control proves a struggle, consider investing in dehydration for poorly insulated rooms with exterior walls or single-glazed windows.7 Keeping a smokeless house in enclosed public places was made illegal in 2007 to protect non-smokers from 7,000-plus chemicals found in second-hand smoke. Toxic tobacco particles in the air remain at harmful levels for up to five hours, so it makes sense to designate your home a smoke-free zone. Remember that incense sticks, candles and everything else that you burn for recreational purposes emit carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide into the air. Incense is more destructive than a candle, emitting more than 100 times the number of fine particles, according to the BLF. If you are concerned, give up paraffin wax candles from oil waste in favor of candles made from natural waxes such as beeswax and soy such as those from Neom Organic. Avoid synthetic fragrances or dyes, but keep in mind that essential oils can also irritate some people with allergies8. Banish air freshenerAir fresheners can help mask bad odors, but every syringe sprays a stream of synthetic chemicals in your home. Swap the painful flavor of fake vanilla for naturally-flavored or fragrance-free products. Better yet, go completely naturally with an organic room diffuser or essential oil burner. Neutralize cooking smells on the cord, leaving a bowl of white vinegar in the kitchen overnight or microwaved lemon slices in water. You can even make your own air freshener by mixing baking soda and lemon juice with hot water and pouring the mixture into an empty spray bottle. Use non-toxic paintHunt from paints, low in VOCs and don't have that giveaway fresh paint smell. Paint brands claiming that non-toxic should display lists of ingredients on their can or be happy to provide them if asked. They're Them Contain any plastic, as this creates a barrier on the walls that traps the air, leading to the development of mold. Try to avoid petrochemicals derived from acrylic, formaldehyde, ammonia and oil, as well as synthetic dyes. Ditch oil-based paints in favor of water-based paints, but make sure it doesn't just mean they're watered down. Government rules mean that all paints can only have enough VOCs in them to be considered safe. However, some have fewer levels than others. Little Green is vegan friendly and formulated using sustainable vegetable oils or water bases with almost no solvents, while leading paint brand Farrow and Ball makes it fully water-based paint made of porcelain clay, which helps reduce condensation and mold. Wave farewell to the wood-burning furnace More than one million of us wood-burning furnace. However, studies have shown that using it once indoors exposes a family to more air pollutants than standing on traffic clogged with roundabouts during rush hour. Wood burners, especially older models, emit smoke that can damage lung tissue and lead to long-term breathing problems. Electric fires or period-style radiators can be atmospheric without carcinogens, but if you can't bring yourself to abandon a wood-burning stove, bust open these windows as often as possible to freshen up the air.11 Stock up on houseplants (but you'll need a lot!) the air-cleaning benefits of houseplants have been widely documented, but you need the jungle to make a notable impact on air quality. Last year, researchers from the Journal of Impact Science and Environmental Epidemiology found that it would take 10 to 1,000 plants per square metre to compete with the air-cleaning power of a pair of open windows in the house. Room plants absorb pollutants, just so slowly that their impact is almost negligible. If you're in the market for a new plant anyway, NASA's 1989 Clean Air Study found that the world of lilies, ferns, devil's ivy and spider plants are among the best in removing chemicals like formaldehyde and carbon monoxide from the air. Like this article? 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