

Healthy Air Walkthrough Classroom Checklist

There are simple things you can do around your school to keep teachers and classmates healthy and safe. The quality of your classroom's indoor air can play a role in both your health and your academic success. Many sources of indoor air pollution can also trigger a person's asthma and allergy symptoms. Use this checklist to identify items that may be hidden sources of indoor air pollution in your classroom. This can be a classroom project and a good way to get students involved in recognizing what contributes to good indoor air quality. Once you have identified the possible indoor air pollution culprits, take steps to either eliminate or reduce exposure to these items. Here is a list of easy-to-spot causes that may be affecting the air you breathe.

Get ready. Get set. Get asthma-friendly!

Keep it clean and clutter-free

- Eliminate food storage in the classroom.** Storing snacks and food products can attract rodents, cockroaches, and other pests, which can be possible sources of asthma triggers. If you must have food in the classroom, keep food in sealed containers and store them in the appropriate places. Remember to remove all trash and clean up any spills at the end of the school day to reduce the chance of enticing unwanted guests.
- Reduce the amount of dust and dust mites in the classroom.** Dust mites are microscopic creatures that live in dust and all types of fabric. Dust mites are a known trigger for many people with allergies and asthma. Reduce exposure by eliminating clutter such as stacked papers and trinkets where dust can collect. Make sure that classroom surfaces get vacuumed and dusted regularly. Keeping your classroom free of stuffed animals, pillows, area rugs and upholstered furniture can rid the learning space of known breeding grounds for those pesky bugs.
- Identify areas of moisture and mold.** Particles from mold can be dangerous to everyone, including people with lung disease. Look at your ceilings, walls, by windows, and under the classroom sink, for water damage or mold. Report any suspicious finding to your school's janitorial staff. It's important to not only remove the mold, but to also fix the source of the leak as well.

Fragrance-free is best (or Are you scents-less?)

- Establish a fragrance-free policy in your school to protect the health of students and school staff.** Strong smelling cleaning products and fragrances from perfumes, air fresheners, and other personal care products can bring on a person's asthma symptoms or cause an allergic reaction. To be safe, eliminate all scented items from the campus. Share this sample policy with your school administrators and work with your janitorial staff to find fragrance-free cleaning supplies.
- Keeping the classroom clean doesn't mean keeping assorted cleaning chemicals.** Make sure the classroom has only school-approved cleaning supplies. Fragrance-free cleaning chemicals can reduce the chances of someone having asthma symptoms or an allergic reaction to the strong odors in many cleaning products. Remove or properly dispose of any cleaning products lurking in classroom cabinets. Reach out to your janitorial staff for a list of approved, fragrance-free items.

Reduce exposure to potential classroom allergens

- Remove the classroom pet.** While many pets can be cute, cuddly learning opportunities, they also pose a health risk to students with asthma and allergies. Animals with fur or feathers shed dander (animal skin or hair), which can cause itchy eyes, runny noses and wheezing. Find a permanent home for your classroom pet and invest in a more asthma-friendly option, like a friendly goldfish in an aquarium.
- Look for rodent or bug traps around the classroom, specifically in corners or under tables.** When possible, instead of placing traps or using pesticides try to find the source of the problem that is drawing these pests indoors. Is there food or crumbs lying around the classroom? Are there places where pests can easily get in the classroom, like by cracks near windows? If you notice any red flags, contact your school's janitorial staff to address the issue and share with them the EPA's Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Action Kit.
- Identify and remove possible allergens.** In addition to fragrances from flowers, perfumes, and other personal care products, many students have allergies to certain foods, such as peanuts or shellfish. It is important to identify the students in your classroom that have these allergies and take steps to avoid accidental exposure. Eliminate products that cause a student's allergies, reduce eating in the classroom, and keep the classroom trashcan food-free.

Make sure the air is fresh and flowing

- Keep air circulating in the classroom.** To help keep the classroom healthy, it is important that air is constantly moving through the school building. When you close vents or cover them with books and boxes, it prevents airflow that is beneficial to everyone. Check to see that all vents in your classroom are open and are free of clutter and dust. Remember, temperature can affect asthma so keep the classroom at a comfortable 72° F to 76° F.
- Outdoor air can play a role in your indoor air.** Look outside the classroom window. Do you see a bus or car idling as the driver waits to pick up students? Is someone on the school campus smoking? If these things are happening near an intake vent (where air is pulled into the building) or by open windows, this can have an effect on your classroom's indoor air quality. Work with your school to get an idle-free policy and comprehensive smoke-free campus policy adopted.