

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Promoting Healthy Schools

There are some things that teachers 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 teachers that will 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 furry objects into the classroom. Pets have dander. Plants have spores and their soil breeds mold. Rugs and furry objects retain dust mites, molds and odors. These are allergens and asthma triggers.

Avoid using chemicals. Please don't bring in your own cleaning products, especially sprays and air fresheners. Ask your facilities manager to look into buying environmentally preferable cleaning products. Use odorless 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 leads to mold problems.

Clean up food and drinks well. 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 and getting rid of any food-related garbage. Better yet, have them eat in the cafeteria. Don't spray pesticides. They're unhealthy.

Refrain from storing materials in cardboard containers. Paper products get moldy and dusty. Use plastic or metal ones instead.

Consider establishing an Environmental Health and Safety Committee in your school. Use EPA's Tools for Schools as your guide: www.epa.gov/region01/eco/iaq/