

# Healthy Air Walkthrough

## FOR AN ASTHMA-FRIENDLY CLASSROOM

Indoor air pollution can be a trigger for a person with asthma or allergy symptoms. Keep your classroom air healthy with this list of easy to follow tips.

### ▶ KEEP IT CLEAN AND CLUTTER-FREE

- Eliminate food storage in the classroom.** Rodents and other pests can be a source of asthma triggers, so the best advice is to keep food out of the classroom or in stored containers and empty trash cans that have food in them.
- Reduce the amount of dust and dust mites in the classroom.** It's important that classroom surfaces get vacuumed and dusted regularly. Keeping your classroom free of clutter, stuffed animals, pillows, area rugs and upholstered furniture can eliminate dust and rid breeding grounds for dust mites who live in dust and fabrics.
- Identify areas of moisture and mold.** Particles from mold can be dangerous to everyone, including people with lung disease. Look at your ceilings, walls, window frames, 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

- 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 are triggers for asthma symptoms and allergic reactions. To be safe, eliminate all scented items from the campus. Work with your school administrators on fragrance-free policies.
- Keep the classroom clean with fragrance-free cleaning chemicals.** Make sure the janitorial staff uses fragrance-free cleaning supplies as well as your own personal supply of cleaning products. 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.



### ▶ REDUCE EXPOSURE TO POTENTIAL CLASSROOM ALLERGENS

- Remove the class pet.** While many pets can be cute, cuddly learning opportunities, they unfortunately also pose a health risk to students with asthma and allergies. Animals with fur or feathers shed dander which can cause itchy eyes, runny noses and wheezing. Try 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.
  - 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. 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 72oF to 76 oF.
  - 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.

This checklist was adapted from the EPA's IAQ Tools For Schools *Teacher's Classroom Checklist*.



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