

Home Walk-Through Checklist



Your health and air quality are linked

When we think of air pollution we usually think of outdoor air, but the quality of the air we breathe indoors is also important. Many common pollutants are actually found at levels 2-5 times higher inside than out. Alaskans spend about 90% of their time indoors, and 60% of that in their homes, so it is essential to ensure adequate air exchange and the elimination of indoor contaminants. Today's building practices have made homes tighter and more energy efficient by containing the heated or cooled air inside our homes. Unfortunately, at the same time, we have also contained any pollutants that have come into or been generated in our homes...pollutants such as carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, cigarette smoke, dust, pet dander and molds and bacteria, which can cause or exacerbate respiratory conditions.

Your health and air quality are linked. Clean indoor air is important for everyone, but it is especially important for children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with lung disease, including asthma. Asthma is on the rise nationally, and though no cause has been determined

for this increase, we do know that many common indoor pollutants can exacerbate asthma symptoms, and early exposure may be linked to a higher risk of developing asthma. Learning about potential asthma triggers and environmental control is an integral part of asthma management.

There are many simple, effective steps you can take to improve indoor air quality. Your personal habits, the products and appliances that you use, your pets, and how you keep your home will all influence the interior environment. This checklist will help you identify the sources of pollutants typically found in household environments and suggest ways to manage them. It can be used in your current residence, or to alert you to possible indoor air issues on a walk-through of a home you are considering for purchase. It is not intended to rate the quality of your home's indoor air, only to aid your recognition of potential problem areas and what measures you might take to avoid them.

General considerations throughout the house

- Restrict smoking in house
- Install carbon monoxide detectors
- Air out the house often
- Always use adequate ventilation when using toxic products, cleaning supplies, painting, or during renovation
- Use exhaust fans when cooking or showering
- Check for leaks around foundation and from roof
- Drain water away from building using proper gradients and gutters and downspouts
- Fix plumbing leaks and leaks around appliances (dishwashers, washing machine, hot water heater)
- Eliminate standing water
- Keep humidity between 30-50%
- Install smoke detectors
- Keep pet areas clean or restrict pets away from sensitive individuals

Tips for clean indoor air in Alaska - Tip Sheets

"Healthy Breathing Begins at Home" Tip Sheets are informative resource sheets on specific indoor air quality issues.

1. Backdrafting
2. Basement Moisture
3. Carbon Monoxide
4. Dehumidifiers
5. Dust Mites
6. Eliminating Asthma Triggers
7. Furnace Filters
8. Healthy Cleaning Alternatives
9. Humidifiers
10. Lead
11. Mold Control
12. Pesticides
13. Radon
14. Secondhand Smoke
15. Sneezeless Landscaping
16. Volatile Organic Compounds

Home Walk-Through Checklist



Kitchen

Stove, oven, ranges

- In good working order
- Properly vented
- Use exhaust fans or hood when cooking
- Flames on gas burners should appear blue

Sinks and faucets

- Check for leaks & make repairs
- Keep under sink dry

Cleaning products

- Avoid toxic products and aerosols
- Substitute mild agents, such as baking soda, vinegar
- Store all products safely

Cleanliness

- Keep surfaces clean
- Store food in sealed containers
- Eliminate pests with least toxic means (bait, traps)
- Check for molds

See tip sheets #8, #12

Bathrooms

Sinks, showers, tub surrounds

- Check for leaks under sinks, around faucets
- Look for mold on tub surround, grout or shower stalls
- Eliminate mold with detergent and 10% bleach solution

Floors, tiles

- Mop floors regularly
- Wash area rugs often
- Keep floors dry
- Keep tiles clean

Ventilation

- Use exhaust fan to remove moisture

Cleaning products

- Store cleaning products safely
- Select non-aerosols
- Substitute less noxious products

See tip sheets #8, #11

Living, dining, family rooms

Window & floor coverings

- Select natural fabrics that can be washed or wiped
- Vacuum using hepa filter bags at least weekly
- Use washable slipcovers

Cleanliness

- Dust with damp cloth if possible
- Use door mats or remove shoes to stop dirt at the door
- Minimize clutter and decorative items to keep dust down
- Don't burn candles or use room deodorizers
- Check for standing water in plant containers

See tip sheets #4, #5, #6, #14, #15

Bedrooms

Bedding

- Wash linens weekly in 130-140° f water
- Use protective mattress & pillow covers
- Select hypoallergenic materials
- Keep pets out of sleeping areas

Windows, floors & furnishings

- Wipe baseboards & window frames often
- Clean draperies & rugs frequently
- Vacuum using hepa filter bags frequently
- Dry wet carpet areas in 24 - 48 hrs.
- Wipe down shelving, furniture & toys
- Limit stuffed animals & throw pillows
- Clean closets & air out often
- Air out dry cleaning when first brought home

See tip sheets #5, #6, #9



Home Walk-Through Checklist



Heating, ventilation and filtration

Furnaces, woodstoves, fireplaces

- All fuel-burning appliances should be properly vented
- Fuel burning appliances should be cleaned & inspected regularly
- Check for leaks, faulty seals
- Use high efficiency filters on furnaces
- Change or clean filters regularly
- Repair cracks or leaks immediately
- Check for blocked vents or ducts
- Use air cleaning or filtration device if necessary
- Install mechanical ventilation in tight homes

See tip sheets #1, #3, #7

Basement, utility room

Appliances

- Make sure furnace, hot water heater & fuel-fired appliances are properly vented
- Have all combustion appliances routinely inspected
- Check for leaks or cracks and have these repaired immediately

Moisture control

- Look for outside water seeping in at foundation, damp corners
- Eliminate any standing water and fix its source
- Investigate moldy odors and remediate

Toxic fumes

- Maintain adequate ventilation when using household or hobby products (paints, glues, stains, strippers) that emit fumes
- Store toxic products properly

Radon

- Gas may seep in through cracks in foundation, unsealed pipes, drains, test if you suspect a problem

See tip sheets #2, #13, #16

Garage

Auto exhaust

- Don't run vehicles in attached garage
- Install exhaust fan in attached garage

Appliances, fuel-powered tools *(not recommended in attached garage)*

- Properly vent fuel-fired appliances stored here (eg, furnace, area heater)
- Use fuel-powered tools only with adequate ventilation

Toxic fumes *(not recommended in attached garage)*

- Store products containing volatile organic compounds safely (solvents, paints, strippers, adhesives, fuel)
- Use products that may emit fumes only with adequate ventilation

See tip sheets #3, #16

Clean indoor air doesn't just happen

It's up to you!

This checklist helps you to recognize the major household sources of contaminated air. For more in depth coverage of these problems, consult the tip sheets referred to in the checklist. Nearly all air quality issues in the home can be viewed in terms of moisture control, ventilation, cleanliness, and toxic fumes. Once you have identified problems, fix them promptly and plan a regular maintenance schedule. Think of addressing indoor pollution with these three actions: eliminate, separate, ventilate. Preventing indoor pollution is an ongoing process. By practicing safety and vigilance, you can monitor your environment and ensure that your home provides you with good, clean air.

Visit us at www.aklung.org

1. These guidelines are for use in maintaining or renovating your home with the goal of improving the quality of the air you breathe indoors.

2. Tips for Clean Indoor Air is a set of guidelines for use in maintaining or renovating your existing home with the goal of improving the quality of the air you breathe indoors. This project is funded by Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. American Lung Association of Alaska and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation are not to be held liable and do not make any guarantees regarding the outcome of consumer implementation of these guidelines. Tips are not intended to be construed as medical advice or replace the consultation of a physician or specialist in any way.

3. For answers to lung health questions, you can speak directly with a registered nurse or respiratory therapist at no charge by calling the Call Center: 1-800-LUNGUSA

