



## Indoor Air Quality

WORKING PARTY

# Healthier air at home

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## Information for health practitioners

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health conducted a systematic review of scientific studies about effects of indoor pollution on children's health. Members of the Indoor Air Quality Working Party reviewed the evidence and devised recommendations for action upon which this information sheet is based. These findings, including health effects at different stages of childhood, and the supporting references are contained in the RCPCH RCP publication "The inside story: Health effects of indoor air quality on children and young people" published in January 2020.

## Why is clean indoor air important?

Poor indoor air quality at home is linked to poor health in people of all ages. Poor indoor air quality in indoor environments has been linked to low birthweight and preterm birth as well as a variety of symptoms and health effects in childhood including:

- respiratory problems – such as wheeze, asthma, rhinitis, respiratory infections,
- allergies and skin conditions such as eczema
- conjunctivitis, skin and eye irritation
- headaches

Exposure to poor indoor air quality has also been linked in studies to greater hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention and reduced cognitive performance.

If you have patients presenting with these symptoms, it may be beneficial to discuss their home environment and actions they could take to improve the indoor air quality.

## Overview tips

Poor indoor air quality is not always easy to identify, and every home is different. Patients should follow any guidance and advice for ventilation that was provided for their home. The actions suggested here are options you could discuss with your patients and guardians to help guide their choices.

## Avoid bringing pollutants indoors

 <b>SMOKING OR VAPING</b>	 <b>LAUNDRY</b>	 <b>BURNING</b>	 <b>OUTDOOR POLLUTANTS</b>
<p>Do not smoke or vape, or allow others to smoke or vape, in a home.</p>	<p>Dry laundry outside, if possible and not suffering from pollen allergy, to reduce the risk of damp and mould.</p>	<p>Avoid charring or burning food and minimise the use of stoves and open fires. Avoid burning things in the home, such as candles.</p>	<p>Prevent pollutants from outside entering the building by reducing ventilation when the outdoor air is polluted, for example during rush hour or when there is a high pollen count.</p>

## Reduce the number of products

 <b>CLEANING</b>	 <b>PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS</b>	 <b>DIY</b>
<p>Reduce the number of different cleaning products or use a multi-purpose cleaner. Where possible, use liquid rather than spray products. If available, chose products labelled with clear information about their level of harmful ingredients .</p> 	<p>Reduce the number of different cosmetic products and never mix products unless directed on the label.</p>	<p>Follow manufacturers guidance when doing DIY at home and try to choose low VOC paints, varnishes and furnishings. Only do DIY when necessary.</p>

## Remove pollutants indoors

 VENTILATE	 CLEAN	 ALLERGENS
Use ventilation especially during cooking, cleaning, and bathing. 	Clean to remove dust, and mould, at home. 	If members of the household are allergic to pollen, house dust mites, mould or pets, steps should be taken to reduce exposure to these.

## Know how to use and maintain equipment

 VENTILATION	 VACUUM
Learn how the home is ventilated and any associated maintenance requirements. 	Regularly empty and maintain vacuum cleaners.



## Coronavirus

Improving the indoor environment by using these tips will help to improve overall health. Cleaning and ventilation in your home are also particularly important to help reduce the spread of airborne infections, including coronavirus. Specific recommendations for coronavirus are:

### Ventilation

- Ventilation is the process of introducing fresh air into indoor spaces while removing stale air. It is important to maintain fresh indoor air.
- Letting fresh air into indoor spaces can help remove air that contains virus particles and prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and other respiratory infections such as flu.
- It is recommended to air out homes regularly to get rid of stale indoor air. If your patient has trickle vents on the windows in their home, they should make sure these are kept open to provide background ventilation.

## Cleaning

- Frequently clean surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles, to reduce transmission of viral infections. Remember to reduce the number of different cleaning products used, select products with less toxic ingredients and follow manufacturers' instructions about storage and use.
- Cleaning products can be a source of airborne pollutants, so it is recommended to follow general advice for cleaning including using ventilation during and after cleaning. Where possible, use liquid rather than spray products and make sure you remove cleaning products from surfaces completely after cleaning



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