

Tools *or* Schools



As childhood asthma rates climb to more than 12 percent, indoor air quality is becoming an even greater concern as we strive to protect children's health.

Since asthma can be controlled through medical treatment and the managing of environmental triggers, it is important to recognize these potential asthma triggers in the indoor environment: Dust mites, molds and yeasts, cockroaches and other pests, pet dander, outdoor pollens and second hand smoke, for a start.

Dust mites are too small to be seen but can live in carpets, upholstered furniture, stuffed toys and curtains. Try limiting these items in the classroom; taking them home occasionally to clean them.

Molds and yeasts are usually associated with moisture problems. Clean-up spills and have leaks repaired, so the mold spores don't have a chance. There is no practical way to eliminate all molds and mold spores in the indoor environment: the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture. Report any cockroach and pest activities. Here at HCPS we use Integrated Pest Management practices. There are four key methods for reducing exposure to pests: inspect for signs of pests; do not leave food, water or garbage exposed; remove pests' pathways and harborages; and minimally use pest control products such as baits and sticky monitors.

Pet dander, outdoor pollens, and second hand smoke are also unwanted visitors to someone with sensitivity. Locate sensitive students as far away as possible from the source.

Asthma-Proof your classroom and home by improving the environment with IAQ practices recommended by the Tools for Schools Program. The Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools (TFS) program uses a 19-step management plan and various checklists for the entire building. You may think "It's just another complicated Washington program", but it's really just common sense – really! Consider these common environmental asthma triggers while you're filling out the Tools For Schools Checklists this month.

Together we can make our classrooms a healthy, comfortable learning space.

Did you know the EPA has a website, www.airnow.gov where you can learn about your local air quality.

'Tools for Schools' is an Indoor Air Quality program designed by the Environmental Protection Agency to provide practical guidance to help prevent IAQ issues in our schools.

