



Indoor Air Quality

With the weather turning cooler and more time spent indoors, consider the importance of indoor air quality. **Studies by the EPA** indicate that people in the U.S. spend (on average) 90% of their time indoors, where they may be exposed to pollutant concentrations 2 to 100 times higher than outdoor levels. Yet, unlike many outdoor pollutants, you have tremendous control over the quality of your indoor air. So take a look at the following tips and resources and breathe a little easier.

Health Impacts

Health effects from indoor air pollutants may be experienced immediately or possibly years after exposure. Effects can include:

- Eyes, nose, or throat irritation
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Asthma
- Hypersensitivity pneumonitis
- Other respiratory diseases

Indoor Air at Home

There are many sources of indoor air pollution in any home. These include:

- Sources of heat and smoke such as oil, gas, kerosene, coal, wood, and tobacco products.
- Building materials and furnishings as diverse as deteriorating insulation, damp carpet, and cabinetry or furniture made of pressed wood products.
- Central heating and cooling systems and humidification devices.
- Outdoor sources such as pesticides and mold.
- Products for household cleaning and maintenance, personal care, or hobbies.

Here are some helpful tips to remember at home:

- Remove or seal off sources of air pollution. This is usually the easiest and most cost effective solution.
- Clean regularly. Mold is a regular problem for moist climates such as Portland.
- Increase ventilation and air flow. Open a window, turn on a fan or air conditioner, or install a mechanical system such as an air-to-air heat exchanger.
- Stay outside whenever possible when engaging in high pollutant activities such as painting, sanding, or smoking.

Indoor Air at the Office

OMF Facilities Services currently performs indoor air quality testing twice a year. They installed high grade filters on all outdoor air units in the Portland Building to stop harmful particles as small as 0.3 microns from coming into the workplace. You also play a significant role in the air quality of your office space.

Here are some tips for healthy air at the office:

- Do not use aerosol cans.
- Do not use "air fresheners".
- Don't block or plug air vents.
- Save the perfume for after work hours.
- Use low-odor, low-VOC pens/markers.
- Use unscented lotions, hand sanitizers, and "green" cleaning products.

Did You Know?

Compressed air keyboard cleaners are some of the most damaging products to indoor air quality. In FY 2009-10 OMF ordered 123 cans (1,230 oz.) of compressed air. Ask your office manager about healthier alternatives.



Dig Deeper

- **Indoor Air Quality Office Products Fact Sheet:** Products available from the City's current office supplies contractor Office Depot.
- **An Introduction to Indoor Air Quality** from the EPA.
- **A Guide to Indoor Air Quality:** Take a tour of a house for common problems and solutions.