



Eco-Healthy Child Care®



Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Air Quality

Health Concerns

Air quality significantly impacts people's health. The health impacts from exposure to air pollution (indoor and outdoor) can include: decreased lung function, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and even some types of cancer. Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults do.

Air Quality

Indoor air pollution is often 2-5 times greater than outdoor levels of air pollution due to a general lack of adequate air filtration and ventilation. The presence of dirt, moisture, and warmth encourages the growth of mold and other contaminants, which can trigger allergic reactions and asthma.

Fortunately, there are many ways to reduce air pollution in both your indoor and outdoor environments.

Improve Your Air Quality:

Never smoke on child care premises or near children. If you do smoke, wear a smoking jacket; remove it upon entering buildings.

Do not idle vehicles. Car exhaust releases pollutants that are harmful to health (especially to children) and the environment. Idling cars release even more pollution than moving cars.

Prevent mold and mildew. Reduce excess moisture by fixing leaks. Increase ventilation naturally by opening windows and using fans. If window air conditioning units are used, check filters regularly and replace as needed.

Clean spills promptly. For spills on carpets, clean and dry carpets ASAP to prevent mold growth.

Prohibit the use of scented candles and artificial air fresheners. These contain multiple chemicals, including dangerous solvents, to achieve their fragrance. Use diluted essential oils instead.

Use biodegradable, least-toxic cleaning products. Find products certified by *Green Seal* (www.greenseal.org) or *EcoLogo* (www.ecologo.org). Why? Many ingredients in cleaning products can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe, irritate the skin and eyes, harm the respiratory tract, as well as damage the natural environment.

Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedures to manage pests. IPM is an effective and environmentally sensitive alternative to pesticides used to control pests with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. See *Pesticides fact sheet*.

Seal all solvent, adhesive, paint, and art supply containers. Store in a well-ventilated area.

Use non-toxic art supplies. Make sure they are approved by the Art & Creative Materials Institute, Inc. (www.acminet.org) or designated AP Non-toxic, or CP Non-toxic. *See Art Supplies fact sheet.*

Remove classroom pets with fur or feathers. Pet allergens can trigger allergic reactions and asthma.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide (CO) exposure. Purchase and install a carbon monoxide detector.

Test your facility for Radon. It is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Call the National Radon Program Services to purchase a test kit (\$15 and up): 1-800-SOS-RADON. *See Radon fact sheet.*

Prevent exposure to damaged or degraded asbestos. If asbestos is intact, leave it alone. If it is damaged, hire an asbestos control professional to collect and test a sample. *See Asbestos fact sheet.*

Use low or no VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) paint. When painting, allow 24 hours of ventilation before re-entering the area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13

Email: info@ecohealthychildcare.org

Visit: www.cehn.org/ehcc

Air Quality Resources

- Third party certifiers for biodegradable, least-toxic cleaning products:
www.greenseal.org
www.ecologo.org/en
- Indoor air quality tools for schools:
www.epa.gov/iaq/schools
- Indoor air quality issues for child care facilities:
www.azdeq.gov/ceh/download/indoorair.pdf
- California Air Resources Board, School Health:
www.arb.ca.gov/research/health/school/school.htm
- American Lung Association:
www.lungusa.org/healthy-air
- Integrated Pest Management:
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

A recipient of EPA's Children's Environmental Health Excellence Award in 2006, Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities. Originally created by the Oregon Environmental Council in 2005, EHCC is now managed by Children's Environmental Health Network.