Indoor Air Quality

*For Safe and Healthy Homes*

**I**ndoor Air Quality is the health of the air inside a home. There can be hazards, gases, and particles in the air that can be dangerous or unhealthy for various family members. It is not always easy to tell if a home has good indoor air quality. The air inside a home can actually be worse for a person’s health than the air outdoors. Most people spend more than half their lives inside their homes, which is why indoor air quality is so important.

The following is a stakeholder and service provider summary of indoor air quality issues in a home:

Lead Poisoning

Homes or apartments built before 1978 could have lead paint. Dust for old lead paint can get into the air and onto floors, windowsills, and other surfaces. Lead exposure is especially hazardous to children under the age of 6.

Asthma and Allergies

Asthma is a lung disease that can be caused by indoor air pollution. An asthma attack is when a person with asthma has extra difficulty breathing. An allergy is an immune response or reaction to substances usually not harmful. Many people have allergies to pets, pollen, mold, and chemicals.

Mold & Moisture

Mold is a kind of fungus. It grows in wet or damp places and it often makes the indoor air smell musty. It produces spores that float in the air and adhere to surfaces in humid or moist areas of a home. Mold is an asthma and allergy trigger.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a deadly gas that is invisible and undetectable without a CO detector and alarm. CO can come from car exhaust, fireplaces, and from other fuel burning appliances that aren’t working right such as a furnace or gas stove.

Radon

Radon is poisonous gas that can cause lung cancer and cannot be seen or smelled. It comes from the ground below a home. It enters a home through cracks in floor slabs and basement or foundation walls.

Pests

Pests are unwanted living things in or around a home. Pesticides can help fight pests, but they can also be dangerous to use at home and can contribute to poor indoor air quality.

Household Chemicals

Many household products can pollute the indoor air if they are not used correctly. Chlorine bleach, cleaning products, alcohol, thinner, and varnish are a few examples. Hobbies and projects like sanding, painting, welding or gluing can pollute the air with dust or harmful chemicals.

Asbestos

Asbestos was used in homes in the past because it has great thermal and fire-resistance. Asbestos fibers are dangerous if they get into the air and are inhaled. Asbestos can cause serious long term health problems including lung cancer. Asbestos is commonly found in materials such as roofing shingles and siding; floor tiles and vinyl flooring, backing and mastic; textured and spray-on ceilings and paints; pipe coverings, thermal insulation, and fireproofing. Asbestos should only be removed or repaired by a licensed professional and not by a homeowner or renter. More information is available by visiting the EPA Asbestos information website at: [www.epa.gov/asbestos](http://www.epa.gov/asbestos)