

# Improving Indoor Air Quality

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Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) refers to the air quality within and around buildings and structures, especially as it relates to the health and comfort of building occupants. Understanding and controlling common pollutants indoors can help reduce your risk of indoor health concerns.

Whether you live in an apartment, townhome or single-family home, an old home or are building a new home, there are many ways to protect and improve your indoor air quality.

Indoor pollution sources that release gasses or particles into the air are a primary cause of indoor air quality problems in homes.

Source control is usually the most effective way to improve indoor air quality is to eliminate individual sources of pollution or to reduce their emissions. Some sources, like those that contain asbestos, can be sealed or enclosed; others, like gas stoves, can be adjusted to decrease the amount of emissions. In many cases, source control is also a more cost-efficient approach to protecting indoor air quality than increasing ventilation because increasing ventilation can increase energy costs.

Most home heating and cooling systems, including forced air heating systems, do not mechanically bring fresh air into the house. Opening windows and doors, operating window or attic fans, when the weather permits, or running a window air conditioner with the vent control open increases the outdoor ventilation rate. Local bathroom or kitchen fans that exhaust outdoors remove contaminants directly from the room where the fan is located and also increase the outdoor air ventilation rate.

Your HVAC filter's job is to remove dust, debris and allergens from the air circulating throughout your home. As your filter collects particulates, it's normal for your filter to get dirty. This is why it's important to regularly change your filter.

Depending on the type of filter your system uses, you may need to change your filter every month or only once a month. Your filter's packaging can likely offer insight. But you may need to change your filter more regularly than the packaging recommends at times.

There are many types and sizes of air cleaners on the market, ranging from relatively inexpensive table-top models to sophisticated whole-house systems. Some air cleaners are highly effective at particle removal, while others, including most table-top models, are much less so. Consulting with your local certified HVAC contractor will help to ensure you are selecting the best product for your needs and budget. ●

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