



# 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 do adults.

### Air Quality

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

**Outdoor air pollution** comes from a variety of sources, including cars, buses, trucks, ships, trains, wildfires, industry, and activities such as smoking or campfires. Traffic pollutants include possible harmful chemicals in gasoline and diesel exhaust. Child care facilities may be exposed to excessive levels of diesel exhaust if they are located less than 500 feet from major roadways or close to heavy bus traffic.

Fortunately, many ways to improve indoor air quality and protect children from harmful outdoor air pollutants exist.

### Improve Your Indoor Air Quality:

**Ventilate, ventilate, ventilate.** Increase ventilation by opening screened windows and using fans.

**Ensure that your HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system is properly maintained and meets legal standards.** If window air conditioning units are used, check filters regularly and replace as needed.

**Prevent mold and mildew.** Reduce excess moisture and humidity. Fix leaks and clean spills promptly. Use a fan that vents to the outdoors in both bathroom and kitchen to reduce moisture and mildew. For major water leaks hire a professional company to ensure drying within 24-48 hours. Consider removing carpet completely if it has been wet longer than 48 hours; mold can grow in the carpet, the layers of padding beneath the carpet, and on the flooring beneath. If removing carpet is not an option, deep steam clean regularly.

**Do not use scented candles, artificial air fresheners or products with fragrances.** These products contain multiple harmful chemicals which can include dangerous solvents and fragrances.

**Ensure all solvents, adhesives, paints, and art supplies are stored in a well-ventilated area.** Products should be sealed tightly and stored in their original containers out of the reach of children. Dispose of anything that is not being used by taking it to a hazardous waste facility. To find one nearest you, visit [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org). Avoid products that emit odors, such as plastic shower curtains.

**Remove classroom pets.** Pet allergens (fur or feathers) can trigger allergic reactions and asthma. Turtles and other amphibians can carry salmonella.

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

**Prevent Carbon Monoxide (CO) exposure.**

Purchase and install a carbon monoxide detector. Gas stoves (stove top and ovens) can be a significant source of carbon monoxide. Install and always use a stove hood that vents to the outdoors to ensure adequate ventilation.

**Never smoke on child care premises, in your car or near children.** If you do smoke, wear an outer garment that you remove upon entering the building. Wash hands immediately.

**Protect Children from Outdoor Air Pollutants**

**Adopt a no-idling policy.** Car exhaust releases pollutants that are harmful to health (especially to children) and the environment. Pollution from idling vehicles can also enter a facility.

**Know Your Air Quality.** Check your local daily air quality index (AQI), usually found in your weather forecast, or visit [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov). If the forecast is for a Code Orange day (unhealthy for sensitive popu-

lations) or above, minimize strenuous outdoor activities or keep children indoors. In some areas, you can sign up for electronic updates; visit [www.enviroflash.info](http://www.enviroflash.info) to find out more.

**Here are other ideas;** for more details, download the related fact sheet from [www.cehn.org/ehcc/factsheets](http://www.cehn.org/ehcc/factsheets).

- **Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedures to manage pests.** *Pesticides fact sheet.*
- **Use non-toxic art supplies.** *Art Supplies fact sheet.*
- **Test your facility for Radon.** *Radon fact sheet.*
- **Avoid purchasing furniture products that have pressed wood (plywood and particleboard).** *Furniture and Carpets fact sheet.*
- **Prevent exposure to damaged or degraded asbestos.** *Asbestos fact sheet.*
- **Use unscented, biodegradable, least-toxic cleaning, sanitizing and disinfectant products.** *Household Chemicals fact sheet.*

### Air Quality Resources

- Indoor air quality tools for schools:  
[www.epa.gov/iaq/schools](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools)
- Check the Air Quality Index for your community:  
[www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov) or [www.enviroflash.info](http://www.enviroflash.info)
- American Lung Association:  
[www.lungusa.org/healthy-air](http://www.lungusa.org/healthy-air)
- Eco-Healthy FAQs on Fragrances; Pet Allergens; and Candles:  
[www.cehn.org/ehcc/FAQ](http://www.cehn.org/ehcc/FAQ)

➔ More Air Quality resources can be found at: [www.cehn.org/ehcc/resources](http://www.cehn.org/ehcc/resources)

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 13**  
**Email: [info@ecohealthychildcare.org](mailto:info@ecohealthychildcare.org)**  
**Visit: [www.cehn.org/ehcc](http://www.cehn.org/ehcc)**

*Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a science-based, award-winning 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.*

**Eco-Healthy Child Care®**

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