



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

Do You Know Who You Are Sleeping With? Asthma and Allergy Strategies to Help You Breathe Easier, Sleep Better and Enjoy Life More!

Objectives:

1. Participants will become aware of possible indoor pollution sources in their homes.
2. Participants will identify resources for reducing symptoms and triggers for possible health concerns.
3. Participants will understand how to make modest modifications in their home environments and reduce possible long term health problems.

Ask: When you go to bed at night, do you ever wake up sniffling or with a dry throat? Do you ever go down into your basement or in your laundry room and your eyes begin to water? Is your skin always dry and flaky? Do you have an adverse reaction to cigarette smoke or tobacco odor?

Ask:

1. Do you know anyone who has asthma?
2. Do you know anyone who often has sinusitis?
3. How often do you change your bedding?
4. Do you ever notice mold on the wall, baseboards or ceiling in your home?

Say:

Too much moisture can cause damage to a home and affect health. Molds and viruses multiply with too much moisture in the home. At low relative humidity, incidents of respiratory infections and allergic rhinitis increase. Other concerns of low humidity are static electricity, damage to furniture and musical instruments, and dry skin. People produce 3 pints of water per day just breathing. Other sources of moisture include cooking, cleaning and taking showers. About one pint of moisture comes from a 10-minute shower. Moisture coming from basement walls and floors can be up to 100 pints per day with wet soil.

Give out Handout 1: "Indoor Air Pollutants." Discuss.



If you smell a musty odor or see mold, you have a problem. You can have your home tested for mold, but it is very expensive and is not necessary if a problem is observed. Just use your own senses of sight and smell to identify if you have a mold problem. Molds grow on organic materials, such as wallpaper, carpet, wood, Sheetrock and soap scum. Excessive moisture allows mold to grow rapidly. Mold must be removed since even dead mold can cause problems to our health. Some people are at higher risk for adverse reactions to mold. Moisture can affect indoor air quality by increasing dust mite populations. Dust mites are tiny creatures that feed on human skin cells that are shed every day. Some people allergic to dust mites will have symptoms such as a runny nose or watery eyes. Dust mites prefer moist environments and soft textures, including bedding, upholstery fabrics and carpeting. Mites do not normally live in the dry environment of a furnace or air-conditioning duct. If not routinely cleaned, humidifiers blow microorganisms into the air. Reduce the possibility of contaminating the air you breathe by cleaning regularly according to the manufacturer's recommendations and rinsing well with water. The best method to reduce indoor pollutants is to remove the source, next is to dilute the pollutant through ventilation, then to remove some of the pollutant by using an air cleaner.

Air filters are the most effective and least costly method to remove particles in the air. Both the percentage of particles removed and the volume of air filtered must be considered in evaluating the effectiveness of air cleaners. They are not designed to remove gas such as radon or carbon monoxide. Units that produce ozone are not recommended.

Give out Handout 2: “Symptoms Related to Biological Pollutants.” Discuss.

Poor indoor air quality may affect health immediately or possibly years later (such as lung cancer). If you experience dizziness, fatigue, or irritations of the eyes, nose or throat, pay attention to the time and place symptoms occur. Note if the symptoms fade when you are away from home and recur once home. It is a good idea to improve air quality in your home even before sensitivity starts. Individuals have their specific sensitivity, which varies greatly from person to person. By taking simple preventive steps, you can keep your home healthy.

Activities in a home produce moisture which needs to be removed. The addition of one pint of moisture will raise the relative humidity of a 1,500 sq. ft. home by about eight percentage points; 40% to 48%. A ten minute shower produces about 1 pint, an unvented combustion heater produces about 7.5 pints for each gallon of fuel burned, respiration by a family of four produces about 0.4 pint per hour and moisture coming from the ground through the basement concrete may produce up to 100 pints per day.

Approximately 625 gallons of water drains from the roof of a 1,000 sq. ft. house during a one-inch rain. Extend down spouts for several feet from the house, and slope the ground about 1 inch per foot away from the house to minimize the potential for roof water causing water problems in the home.



Scientific evidence links mold and other factors related to damp conditions in homes and buildings to asthma symptoms in some people with the chronic disorder, as well as to coughing, wheezing, and upper respiratory tract symptoms in otherwise healthy people, says a report from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies in 2004. Damp conditions and all they entail may be associated with the onset of asthma, as well as shortness of breath and lower respiratory illness in otherwise healthy children, although the evidence is less certain in these circumstances.

Allergic reactions occur due to exposure to many allergens. The EPA estimates that 1 out of 13 children suffer from Asthma and The Institute of Medicine estimates that about 20% of Americans suffer from allergic rhinitis (inflammation of the nasal mucous membrane), the most common chronic disease experienced by humans. About 14% of the population suffers from allergy related sinusitis (inflammation of the sinuses), while about 9% experience allergic dermatitis (inflammation of the skin). Molds are just one of several sources of indoor allergens. Other sources include dust mites, cockroaches, pets, and microorganisms

Ability to perceive odors and respond to them is highly variable among people. Some individuals can detect extremely low concentrations of volatile compounds, while others require high levels for perception. Some people derive enjoyment from odors of all kinds. Others may respond with headache, nasal stuffiness, nausea or even vomiting to certain odors including various perfumes, cigarette smoke, diesel exhaust or moldy odors. Scientific evidence links mold and other factors related to damp conditions in homes and buildings to asthma symptoms in some people with the chronic disorder, as well as to coughing, wheezing, and upper respiratory tract symptoms in otherwise healthy people, says a report from the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies in 2004.

Indoor air quality is important. We breathe about 5,000 gallons of air daily. Indoor air can be more polluted than outdoor air, even in large industrialized cities. We spend 90% of our time indoors. Especially at risk are infants and the elderly, who spend almost all of their time indoors. Indoor pollution can be as serious as carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be life threatening. Excessive moisture inside the home can contribute to indoor air contamination. Testing of indoor air quality in your home is very expensive and usually not practical. It's best to focus on changes you can take to reduce your exposure to indoor pollutants. Moisture levels need to be monitored.

Give out Handout 3: Review “Using Housing Checklist.”





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Handout 1

Indoor Air Pollutants

- Environmental Tobacco Smoke
- Combustion Products
- Allergens: dust mites, animal & bird dander





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Handout 2

Symptoms Related to Biological Pollutants

(mold, dust mites, animal dander, etc.)

- Nasal & sinus congestion
- Sore throat, coughing
- Shortness of breath, chest tightness
- Eye irritation
- Headache
- Fatigue
- Rashes
- Asthma attacks triggered



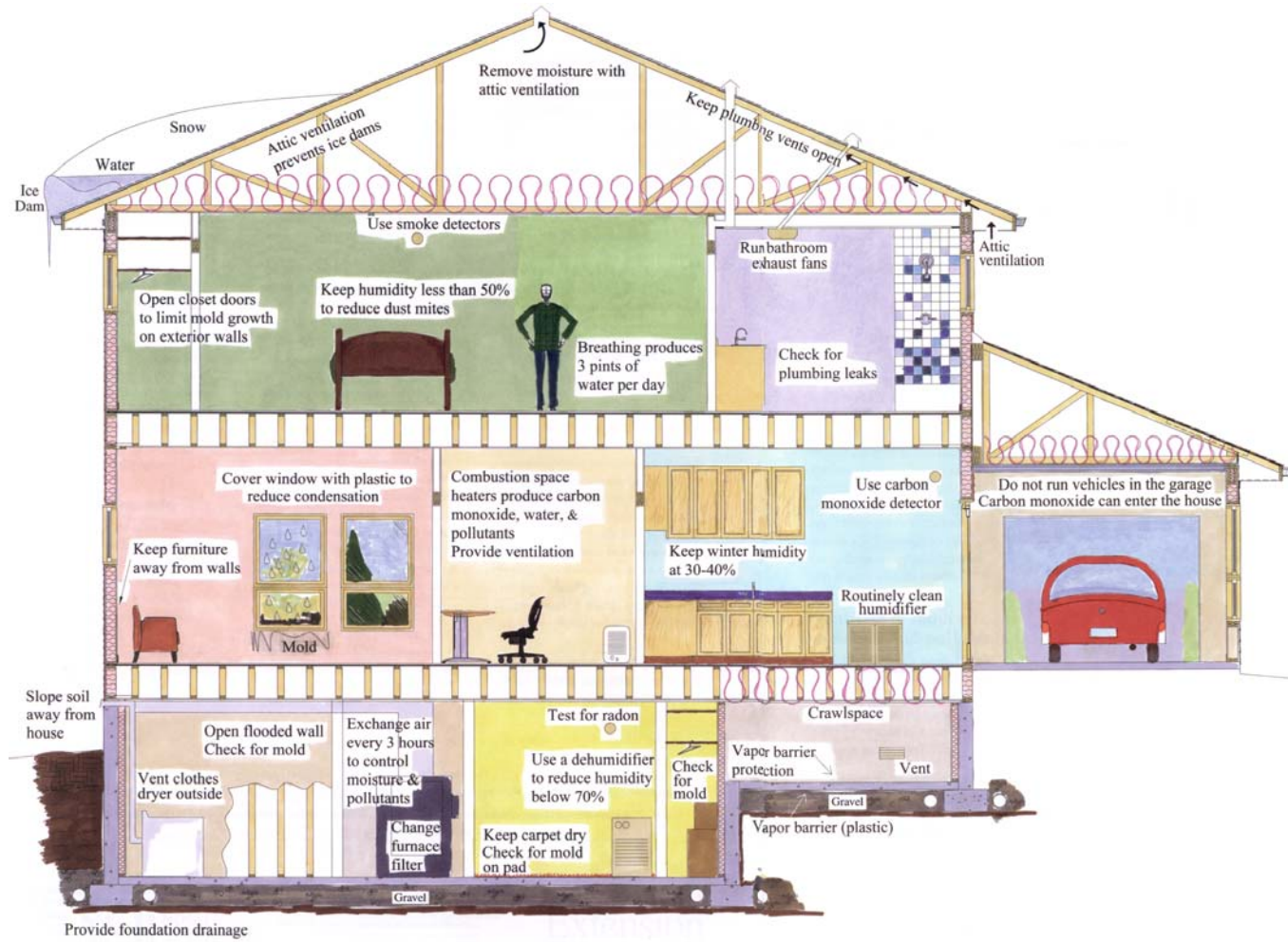


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Handout 3

HOUSING CHECKLIST





Source: Adapted by Deborah J. Thomason, Ed.D., CFLE Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service from The Healthy Homes program sponsored by USDA and EPA.. Additional information provided by North Dakota Extension Service and the University of Minnesota Extension Service

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