

Indoor Air Quality

It might surprise you to hear that the air inside your home is often dirtier than the air outside. That's because indoor air is made up of outdoor air plus all the pollutants and allergens generated from cleaning products, pets, dust, smoke, and so on. Fortunately, you can improve indoor air quality in ways that do not cost a small fortune.

Get the Dust Out

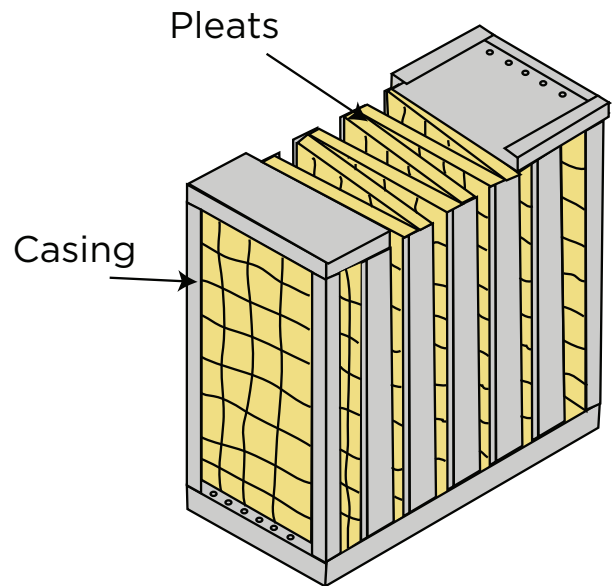
Dust – a major irritant – includes lint, bacteria, pollen, plant and mold spores, pet dander, etc. You can reduce dust particles in the air in a number of ways. Here are three:

1. Clean or replace the furnace filter every three months. Pillar To Post inspectors find that most homeowners do not keep up with this task. Thick-media filters, such as the five- and six-inch pleated type, last longer than regular filters and filter better too. Of course they are more expensive.
2. We all create an invisible dust cloud just walking through our homes. While a high-quality furnace filter will reduce dust, frequent cleaning and vacuuming is also necessary, but only if your vacuum cleaner is up to the task.
3. A poor-quality vacuum cleaner can also create dust clouds. Before you give up on vacuuming, however, two solutions can address this problem: either install a central vacuum system with the canister-air discharge piped outside the house, or purchase a high-quality, portable vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filtration system. HEPA stands for High Efficiency Particulate Air filter. Whichever solution you choose, both will effectively decrease the amount of dust that spews into the air when you vacuum.

Take Control of Humidity

High humidity levels in your home can significantly contribute to mold and dust mite growth. Dust mites, however, are a fact of life; you cannot eliminate them entirely. But you can decrease their numbers. Dust mites thrive in humidity levels above 50%. Ensuring the humidity in your home is not higher than 50% will diminish dust mite growth. Here are a few ways to address humidity:

1. Buy an inexpensive hygrometer to measure the indoor humidity level.
2. Ensure that your clothes dryer vents to the outside.
3. Bathroom and kitchen fans should direct shower, bath and cooking moisture outside.



4. Fix basement leaks and deal with condensation issues.
5. Air conditioning systems and dehumidifiers can also remove moisture from the air. Keep in mind that dehumidifiers use a great deal of electricity and don't provide any cooling. Make sure you deal with obvious sources of moisture first.

Reduce Chemicals in the Air

The chemicals we use in the home contribute significantly to poor indoor air quality. Here are 4 tips to take control of the chemicals in the air:

1. Get rid of products you no longer need, such as old paint cans and other open and half used toxic chemicals and poisons.
2. Opened bottles and jars of cleaning products should be contained in an airtight bin.
3. Consider using less toxic and more environmentally friendly cleaning products.
4. Dry-cleaned clothing spews chemicals into the air. If possible, remove the plastic and hang the stack of dry-cleaning outside for a few hours before bringing it into the house. Of course this may not be practical and we sincerely hope your clothing does not get stolen.

More Efficient Air Exchange

Some homes just need more ventilation. Heat-recovery ventilators, or energy-recovery ventilators are both effective ventilation devices. Some do-it-yourself systems exist out there but we strongly suggest an expert consultation. Choosing the right system involves careful consideration of your home and your specific situation.

Improving air quality in the home is a goal that is easily attainable. Start with the little fixes and then undertake the more complex remedies as needed. You don't have to spend a lot of money to improve the air you breathe.

