

SCHOOLS, COVID-19 & ASTHMA:

CLEANING & INDOOR ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS

NMASBHC Tip Sheet - Asthma Series - #1 of 3

Staff and students planning re-entry to school environments may have questions about safety related to COVID-19. People with asthma may be at greater risk if they contract COVID-19. Changes that schools make to cleaning, disinfecting and ventilation processes can, inadvertently, increase environmental asthma triggers.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have issued guidance to clean and disinfect frequently at home and work during the pandemic. Cleaning products that are commonly used can contain hazardous chemicals that may cause or worsen asthma. The following is a brief description of guidelines to follow when addressing indoor environments and relevant resources to access in making those decisions. Whether decisions are made by the state, districts, individual schools, individual staff at the school, or families, adherence to guidance from the most up-to-date resources will mitigate risk for those students and staff that have asthma.

OFFICIAL FEDERAL AND STATE GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS:

CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

EPA Guidance on Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>

EPA/CDC Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools and Homes

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/guidance-cleaning-and-disinfecting-public-spaces-workplaces-businesses-schools-and-homes>

CDC: Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>

CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

California Department of Public Health's Cleaning for Asthma-Safe Schools Guidance

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/OHB/WRAPP/Pages/CLASS.aspx>

University of Washington's Safer Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Strategies to Reduce and Prevent COVID-19 Transmission

https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/FactSheet_Cleaning_Final_UWDEOHS_0.pdf

Safer Disinfectants - EPA's List of Recommended Antimicrobial Products for use against Novel Human Corona Virus, Responsible Purchasing Network

https://osha.washington.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20Safer%20Disinfectants%20List_March%202020.pdf



CLEANING & INDOOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASTHMA TRIGGERS

Avoid cleaning products with certain chemicals.

Consider safer asthma-friendly products.

GENERAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND TOOLS

- Avoid products that contain bleach (sodium hypochlorite), quaternary ammonium compounds (benzalkonium chlorides), peroxyacetic acid (peracetic acid), and glutaraldehyde.
- If a disinfectant must be used, choose asthma-safer products with the active ingredients hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, lactic acid, ethyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol, sodium bisulfate, or products authorized by the EPA's Design for the Environment: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-labels/design-environment-logo-antimicrobial-pesticide-products>
- As a rule, choose fragrance-free products to avoid triggering asthma.
- Do not diverge from proper product dilution guidance. Greater concentration is no more effective and may trigger asthma.
- EPA's "Creating Healthier Indoor Environments in Schools" website, while not COVID-19 specific, is a great overall tool for addressing indoor environmental asthma triggers: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/index.html>
- EPA's new mobile app for completing an Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Assessment can help with a school-wide approach: <https://www.epa.gov/iaq-schools/school-iaq-assessment-mobile-app>
- Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP) has a wealth of tools for schools: <http://www.rampasthma.org/info-resources/ramp-tools-publications/school-based-health-centers>
- American Lung Association's Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative website is a useful resource: <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/asthma/asthma-education-advocacy/asthma-friendly-schools-initiative>
- The New Mexico Council on Asthma is a useful resource for information on asthma: <https://www.nmasthma.org/>

VENTILATION

There is no special cleaning or disinfection recommended for heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Ventilation is an important part of maintaining good indoor air quality. Adequate ventilation – bringing in 15-20 cfm/person outside air, and using MERV 13 filters, will help with air quality and MAY help with reducing respiratory disease transmission. The ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) website www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/resources, has special COVID-19 guidance. *Note:* if increasing outdoor air, keep in mind the possibility that outdoor environmental triggers could impact individuals with asthma.

