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: The following are hyperlinks to useful resources. To find documents with the websites listed, please visit the <u>NMASBHC Asthma page</u>.

CDC Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility

EPA Guidance on Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19

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

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

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

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

University of Washington's Safer Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Strategies to Reduce and Prevent COVID-19 Transmission, UWDEOHS includes guidance for choosing safer disinfectants

Safer Disinfectants on EPA's List of Recommended Antimicrobial Products for Use against Novel Human Coronavirus, Responsible Purchasing Network

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.
- 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.
- EPA's new mobile app for completing and Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Assessment can help with a school-wide approach.
- Regional Asthma Management and Prevention (RAMP) has a wealth of tools for schools.
- The American Lung Association's Asthma Friendly Schools Initiative website is a useful resource.
- The New Mexico Council on Asthma is a useful resource for information on asthma.

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 has special COVID-19 guidance. Note: if increasing outdoor air, keep in mind the possibility that outdoor environmental triggers could impact individuals with asthma.



*The information included herein was gathered by NMASBHC from the CDC, EPA, American Lung Association, and Regional Asthma Management Program. None of this information is intended to replace official guidance from New Mexico authorities or a patient's medical provider. If you have questions about this information, please reach out via contact information at www.nmasbhc.org.

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