Your Household Air Quality: Ventilation

Keep the Air Fresh and Healthy Indoors

Like the lungs, homes need to be able to breathe to make sure that fresh air comes in and dirty air goes out. Air indoors can build up high levels of moisture, odors, gases, dust, and other air pollutants. To keep the air safe indoors, fresh outdoor air is needed to dilute these indoor pollutants.

Tips to Keep Air Moving and Healthy

• When cooking, always turn your fan on the highest setting. Try cooking on the back burners. If you don’t have a hood or fan, open windows after cooking. Use exhaust fans in bathrooms to remove moisture and gases from the house.

• Fit your kitchen with an exhaust fan that moves the air to the outside. Use the fan or open a window when cooking to remove fumes and airborne particles.

• Make sure gas, propane, wood or other combustion appliances vent completely to the outside. Do not use ventless stoves. Install a carbon monoxide detector in multiple locations in your house.

• Vent clothes dryers to the outdoors, too. Clean out the vent regularly to make sure the dust does not block air flow.

• If you paint or use hobby supplies or chemicals in your home, add extra ventilation. Open the windows and use a portable window fan to pull the air out of the room.

• Test your home for radon, and if you have elevated levels, hire a professional to add ventilation to remove it. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

• If the air indoors remains too moist, look for sources of moisture that need to be controlled. If that still does not solve the problem, a dehumidifier may help. If you use a dehumidifier, make certain you clean it regularly.

• Never idle your car in an attached garage. The exhaust can move into your home.

Ventilation helps reduce indoor air pollution, but it works best if paired with keeping known sources of air pollution out of the building. For example, the only way to reduce the effect of secondhand smoke indoors is to not allow smoking indoors or near the entrances. Ventilation will not solve that problem. Outdoor air can also bring pollution indoors as well, so taking steps to reduce outdoor air pollution is important, too.