

The Center for Indoor Environments and Health's specific mission is:

- to promote indoor environments which protect the health of building occupants and provide productive, creative spaces for learning and work.
- to advance knowledge among health practitioners and environmental health professionals regarding the relationship between indoor environmental factors and adverse health effects, particularly respiratory health outcomes.

We seek to accomplish this mission by focusing the public health, research and clinical capabilities of Occupational and Environmental Health on addressing existing poor conditions and improving indoor environments and health to fulfill the following objectives:

- provide public health resources for communities, school districts, teachers, other building occupants and owners, and state and local health officials to evaluate and solve problems of indoor environmental quality
- prioritize remediation approaches for problem buildings to optimize the use of scarce resources
- develop models in the state of Connecticut useful to the northeast region to solve and prevent problems of indoor environmental quality
- develop educational tools regarding the relationship between indoor environmental factors and adverse health effects
- improve the understanding of prevalence and severity of asthma and other environmentally-related illnesses, especially among teachers and school children



University of Connecticut Health Center

Division of Public Health and Population Sciences
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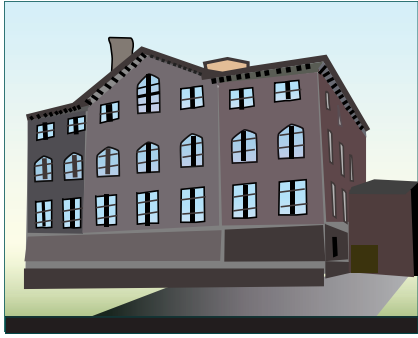
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Why are building communities struggling with managing indoor air quality (IAQ)?

Employees in offices, teachers, and families with school children are finding that buildings' indoor environment affects their health.

Absenteeism and reduced productivity result from building-related illnesses and sick building syndromes. Building owners, employers and health personnel are concerned about occupants' (workers, teachers, children) health, well being and productivity.

The potential economic burden and negative public relations have consequences to the whole community.

Building communities need assistance to sort through and respond to the complexity of health problems in occupants related to building conditions — from major illnesses such as asthma fostered in buildings that generate unhealthy bioaerosols to less serious symptoms more easily remedied.

Public health and medical professionals are increasingly including indoor environmental quality improvements as part of the needed response to address respiratory illness in the population.

What are some of the factors about buildings that contribute to indoor air problems?

Design

Structures built slab on grade, and/or with flat roofs with poor drainage increase the potential for moisture intrusion that then negatively affects the environment.

Materials

Some of the most common materials (sheet rock, ceiling tiles, carpets) in buildings when in poor condition can become sources of contaminants to the air.

Maintenance

Pressure on budgets has made maintenance a neglected challenge in many buildings.

Crowding

Classrooms and offices are put in spaces with poor indoor air quality that was never designed for occupants.

Location

Sometimes the available locations for the building pose challenges for maintaining a “healthy” indoor environment.

System operations

Building ventilation may be designed for adequate indoor air quality, but not built and/or operated properly.

Outdoor pollutants and materials

Outdoor air contaminants (including diesel particulates) and materials brought in by occupants (such as pet dander and hair on clothing) can accumulate indoors and add to occupants' exposures.

How is the CIEH addressing the challenges from these concerns?

The Center for Indoor Environments and Health (CIEH) at the University of Connecticut Health Center builds on the Section of Occupational and Environmental Health's commitment to preventing and treating environmentally-related illnesses, and brings unique perspective and knowledge to these challenges. Our team includes specialists with experience in

- occupational /environmental medicine,
- allergy and immunology,
- industrial hygiene,
- environmental toxicology,
- education, research and training.

The Occupational and Environmental Medicine Clinic offers evaluation and treatment to employees with building-related health concerns.

We have established a track record of collaboration with federal and state agencies, regional organizations, and universities. We have also provided problem solving consultation to school districts, administrators, unions, communities, and parents. Programs have included:

- guidance on Environmental Protection Agency Indoor Air Quality *Tools for Schools* program,
- trainings customized for school nurses on illness and environments,
- risk communication strategies and facilitation for offices and school communities,
- working with the National Institute for Safety and Health on building-related illnesses in an office building,
- the development of a book, “*Guidance for Clinicians on the Recognition and Management of Health Effects Related to Mold Exposure and Moisture Indoors*,” (<http://oehc.uchc.edu/clinser/MOLD%20GUIDE.pdf>), and
- research programs on respiratory disease and environmental exposures.

