

# IAQ for You:

Fact Sheet

## *An Introduction to Indoor Air Quality*



*In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists. – Eric Hoffer*



**Building Biology Institute**  
The science of healthy buildings

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### Biological

All creatures need food and water. Manage pests of any size—from large (rodents) to small (bugs) to very small (mould) by keeping your building dry and clean. Manage moisture entry points in the building's envelope to prevent water from getting into your walls and roof. Be sure to monitor plumbing for leaks and control spills in the home. By keeping building materials dry, you can curb the ability of tiny pests like mould to take hold. That is because they prefer damp building materials to eat. For pests that eat the same foods as we do, maintain a clean home through regular maintenance and putting garbage in sealed waste bins to help prevent them from moving into your space. These same efforts at keeping your building dry and in good shape will lower the potential for mould to take hold. As after all, it requires the same conditions as larger pests. Without damp cellulose materials, mould cannot thrive. Maintaining a clean, dry space will resolve most biological concerns in a home without the need for chemicals to remove pests. After all, you don't have to kill or drive out a pest that never enters your home.

### Particulate

Particulate presents a concern in the form of very small airborne materials we may breathe into our lungs. If it is tiny enough, ultra-fine particulate can directly enter our bloodstream. A myriad of materials and elements can make up particulate. Children are more vulnerable to dust, and more likely to be exposed to it on floor surfaces where they play. The simplest way to deal with particulate is to clean more often. Effective methods include wet wiping and vacuuming using a vacuum with a HEPA filter, which captures the smallest particles possible. If you do not have a HEPA vacuum, open the windows while vacuuming to release stirred-up particulate. Remove soft surface flooring and replace it with solid surface to reduce ultra-fine particulate. Homeowners should clean the building's ductwork, add a better air filter to the furnace, and air seal the home. Taking these steps will cut down on particulate entering the home and circulating throughout.

### Chemicals

Cleaning products are the main source of chemical exposure in most homes. Dispose of your chemical cleaners at a hazardous waste depot and switch to natural-based cleaning products. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have an odour at room temperature and can harm our health. Do not buy any personal care product, cleaning product, or building material that has VOCs if at all possible. If you are unable to replace or remove the source of chemical exposure, your next best options are to ventilate and/or encapsulate. Do not use pesticides; they will affect human health as well as the pest's. Learn to create inhospitable climates for pests before they invade so that pesticides are not required. Choose building materials with low formaldehyde that are more natural-based to reduce the chemicals present.