

Air Quality Management Strategies for Resident Spaces

What is good Indoor Air Quality (IAQ)?

A good indoor air environment includes comfortable temperature and humidity, adequate supply of fresh outdoor air, and control of indoor and outdoor pollutants.

Why might I notice IAQ issues?

- Multiple occupants in small rooms can increase humidity which has been shown to lower satisfaction with indoor air.
- Allergen exposures: dust mites, pests, pet hair and dander may trigger or increase individual symptoms. Relocating from a different geographic area could present new allergen exposures.
- Research shows lighting, furniture crowding, stress, feelings about the physical aspects of the environment, noise and vibration may contribute to the perception of poor IAQ.

Actions to improve IAQ

- Open windows and doors briefly and frequently for fresh air (if operable).
- Use common or outdoor spaces for social or study time.
- Clean weekly: dust, vacuum, wash surfaces.
- Wash bedding, towels and other frequently used soft surfaces weekly.
- Clean spills promptly and empty trash regularly.

Room setup tips to promote good IAQ

- Limit soft surfaces that collect dust.
- Arrange furniture to allow for circulation; avoid placing items directly against exterior walls.
- Use items made from hard, cleanable surfaces (tile, glass, metal) to discourage microbial growth and pests.
- Consider a HEPA air cleaner to help remove allergens; avoid ozone generating devices.
- Avoid air fresheners; most contain fragrances that can trigger asthma and allergy symptoms.

Where do I report an IAQ issue?

If you live in Residence Halls: Residents report IAQ issues in University Housing's on-line Maintenance and Repair Service (MARS) at <https://www.housing.wisc.edu/undergraduate/services/maintenance/> to ensure tracking and follow-up. Submit a web-based maintenance request form for non-emergency repairs or contact a Housefellow or Hall Desk for emergency repairs like water leaks, signs of pests and heating or cooling issues.

If you live in University Apartments: Residents report IAQ issues in University Housing's on-line Maintenance and Repair Service at <https://www.housing.wisc.edu/apartments/maintenance/> to ensure tracking and follow-up. Submit a web-based maintenance request form for non-emergency repairs or contact the Resident Manager on Duty for emergency repairs like water leak and heating issues.

University Housing works with UW-Madison Environmental and Occupational Health and other campus partners to review and respond to resident concerns. In many cases, improving indoor air quality focuses on identifying and addressing potential sources (such as moisture, ventilation, or cleanliness) rather than relying on air testing. This is because there are limited health-based standards for most indoor air contaminants (including mold), and individuals can respond differently to the same environment.