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How to improve your home's air quality

It seems everyone is talking about the environment these days. Yet, you don't seem to hear much about the environment indoors. Considering how much time most people spend inside, it makes sense to give some thought to the air quality within your home. Believe it or not, air inside a house can have two to five times the allergens and pollutants than outdoor air, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Ironically, the problem is due in large part to the efficiencies of today's home," says Victor Flynn, National Marketing Manager for the Panasonic Home & Environment Company. "With all the advancements in home building, new and remodeled homes are increasingly air tight, which is good in terms of saving energy. However, it's important to maintain proper ventilation to avoid any harmful effects from trapped dust, mold and chemical fumes." Flynn is offering some simple steps to help protect your home and family. Here are a few of the most common indoor irritants and how to deal with them:

- **Excessive Moisture:** Moisture in walls, ceilings, carpets and furniture, or poorly maintained humidifiers, dehumidifiers and air conditioners can not only have negative health effects but can cause structural damage to a home. To prevent moisture problems, frequently empty water trays in air conditioners, dehumidifiers, and refrigerators. Also, clean and dry or remove water-damaged carpets and install and use fans vented to the outdoors



in kitchens and bathrooms.

- **Cigarette Smoke:** By now, most people are aware of the potential side effects of cigarette smoke. Homes with one or more smokers may have particle levels several times higher than outdoor levels. One obvious solution is to not allow smoking in your house. If smoking indoors can't be avoided, increase ventilation in the area where smoking occurs and open windows or use an exhaust fan.
- **Allergens:** Microscopic particles that irritate allergies and asthma can become trapped in rugs, carpeting, furniture fabric and float free in the air. Integrating a quality ventilation system can remove a large measure of these contaminants.
- **Other Pollutants:** Paints, solvents, and other chemicals should not be stored in the house, but rather in a garage or shed. If the garage is attached, make sure there is an airtight seal between the home and garage.

In the past, many people were reluctant to install ventilation fans because they were noisy and intrusive, but technology has come a long way. For example, Panasonic's Whisper Green line of ventilation fans are not only quiet, but up to 460 percent more energy efficient than minimum Energy Star requirements. They even come with designer grille options that allow consumers to match their home's decor.

"Even with the soft housing market, homeowners continue to show a high interest in green building standards," adds Flynn. "By using simple, affordable solutions, consumers can contribute to environmentally conscious building and, perhaps more importantly, protect themselves from harmful indoor air pollutants."

For more information about how to improve your home's indoor air quality, visit www.epa.gov/iaq or www.Panasonic.com/ventfans.

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