

Formaldehyde Hazards in Childcare Centers

Formaldehyde is a colorless gas with a strong odor and is flammable at room temperature. It is widely used in building materials and consumer products.

Protect your childcare center staff and children by understanding the hazards of formaldehyde and identify steps to reduce indoor air levels of formaldehyde.



Know the health risks.

- Breathing certain levels can cause/worsen asthma, cause eye/nose irritation, and result in allergic reactions.
- Short and long-term exposure can cause respiratory symptoms and eye, nose, and throat irritation.
- Breathing in high amounts in some workplaces (e.g. medical setting, funeral home) has been linked to some types of cancers.



Understand the exposure.

- Formaldehyde is released into the air from pressed wood products, carpets, fabrics, and insulation through a process called off-gassing.
- Off-gassing is increased with high temperatures and humidity.
- New manufactured wood products, such as flooring and furniture, have higher levels.



Reduce the exposure.

- Increase ventilation and use exhaust fans.
- Keep temperature and humidity at the lowest comfortable setting.
- Wash new curtains and other permanent-press fabrics before use.
- Use products labeled “No VOC or Low VOC.”
- Consider ANSI standard-compliant composite wood products.^{*}

^{*} See epa.gov/formaldehyde/protect-against-exposures-formaldehyde



Use the QR code to access our fact sheet with more detailed information and resources on how to protect childcare staff and children from formaldehyde exposure.