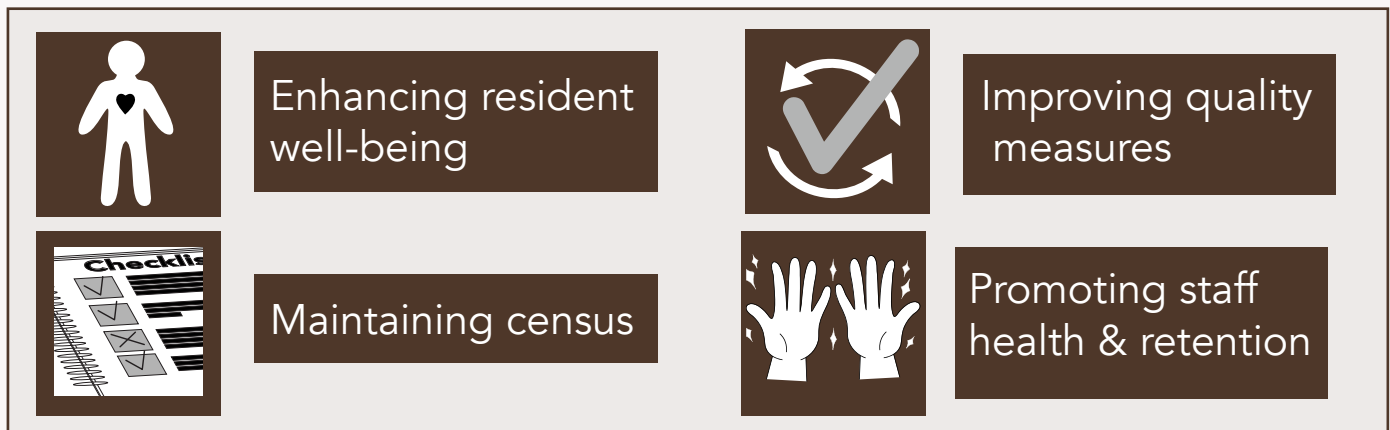


Indoor Air Quality Action Plan for Nursing Center Leaders & Staff

Better air means better care. This action plan empowers nursing center leaders and staff to improve health outcomes through targeted indoor air quality improvements. The air we breathe contains invisible particles, pollutants, and viruses. Increasing the flow of clean outdoor air and filtering indoor air can significantly reduce health risks and serve as a powerful [infection reduction strategy](#).

Cleaner air is a highly effective – but often underused – approach to protecting the health, safety, and quality of life of residents, staff, and visitors. It aligns with key priorities consistently identified by industry leaders:



Improved air quality reduces unpleasant odors, removes harmful pollutants, and lowers the spread of airborne viruses like flu, COVID-19, and RSV. It also reinforces other core infection prevention measures, such as hand hygiene and personal protective equipment. Below are strategies you can use, either individually or all together, to improve indoor air quality in your facilities, including links to resources on how to take action

Action Plan



Ensure HVAC systems, when present, are operating as intended: Give your building a “tune up” every three to five years, through a process called commissioning. This ensures that HVAC systems are functioning properly and that you can address any issues. [Find trained and skilled HVAC professionals in your area.](#)



Use Portable Air Cleaners: Place portable air cleaners in common areas where residents, staff, and visitors gather, and individual resident rooms. Prioritize use in rooms occupied by residents with respiratory infections or risk factors. [Learn how to select portable air cleaners](#) for your facility.



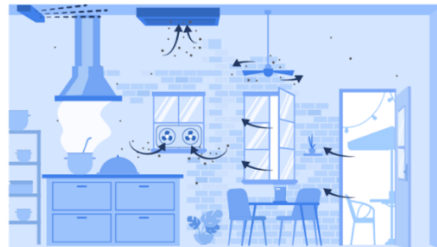
Enhance Air Circulation: Turn on ceiling fans to promote air mixing, activate restroom and kitchen vents to expel contaminated air from the building, and use ductless air conditioners, fans, or exhaust vents to direct airflow outside. Higher “air exchange” rates reduce disease transmission and protect against contaminants like smoke and allergens. The CDC advises five air exchanges per hour. [Calculate your air exchange rate.](#)



Poor Ventilation



Good Ventilation



CDC. May 2023 Improving Ventilation In Buildings



Use Windows and Doors: Opening windows and doors can facilitate better air mixing and flow. Repair windows and doors to enable them to open when it's safe to do so.



Adjust HVAC Settings and Upgrade Air Filters: During times of increased risk, adjust HVAC settings to provide cleaner air:

- *When respiratory disease risk is high*, for example during outbreaks, set HVAC systems to “ON” instead of “AUTO” to increase system runtime. Increase the proportion of clean outdoor air entering the facility by turning OFF the recirculate or ‘recirc’ mode so the system pulls in fresh outdoor air instead of reusing the same indoor air.
- *For wildfire and pollution events*, keep the HVAC system “ON,” but also turn “ON” the recirculate mode to keep unclean air from entering the building.
- *For all risks*, replace air filters in mechanical ventilation systems with the high filtration levels, using MERV 13 filters for infection control and wildfire events. [Learn about these filters and their health impacts.](#)



Monitor Indoor Air Quality: Use low-cost air monitors to measure pollutants like particulate matter (PM2.5) and carbon dioxide indoors so facility operators can identify when concentrations are too high. Learn about [recommended thresholds for indoor pollutants](#) and the [use of monitors](#).



Support Infection Preventionists and Building Operators: Provide ongoing [education and training](#) to ensure effective implementation of air quality measures. Learn about [the interaction between indoor air quality and infectious diseases](#).



Consult Experts: For a customized approach, work with an occupational and environmental health and safety professional, HVAC specialist, or other indoor air quality experts to identify additional strategies tailored to reduce the spread of airborne illnesses and improve indoor air quality according to the specific needs of your facility. [Find occupational environmental health and safety professionals.](#)

For cost considerations, [refer to the CDC's financial estimates](#) for taking action on indoor air.

Resources:

[Find trained and skilled HVAC professionals in your area](#)
[Portable air cleaners: Selection, placement, and upkeep](#)
[How much ventilation is enough?](#)

[Understanding MERV filters](#)
[Example IAQ thresholds](#)
[Low-cost air pollution monitors](#)
[Education and training](#)