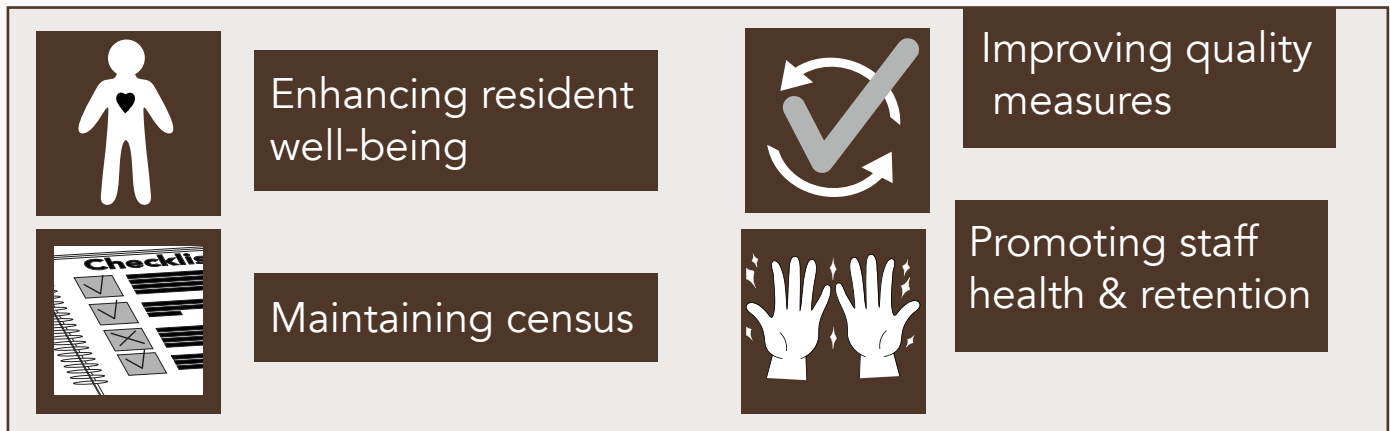


# Making the Case for Clean Indoor Air: Info for Nursing Centers

**You should prioritize indoor air quality: Your residents, staff, and bottom line will thank you for it.** There are invisible particulates, pollutants, and viruses in the air we breathe. Cleaner air is a highly-effective—yet often overlooked—strategy for infection reduction and protecting the health, safety, and quality of life of nursing center residents, staff, and visitors.

Nursing center leaders consistently cite the following benefits of cleaner air:



## How?

Filtration and ventilation reduce unpleasant odors, harmful pollutants, and airborne viruses like flu, COVID, and RSV making the environment more pleasant and keeping people healthier. Clean indoor air also adds additional benefits on top of other infection prevention reduction strategies, like hand washing and the use of PPE. Actions can be simple: adding portable air purifiers, opening windows when safe to do so, and upgrading HVAC filters.

The most dangerous risks to health are invisible in the air we breathe: respiratory viruses, bacteria (such as pneumonia and legionella), and allergens. Other invisible threats are fine particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and mold:

- **Fine particulate matter** can penetrate deep into the bloodstream, leading to respiratory disease, heart disease, and cognitive decline. Particulate matter comes from things like car emissions, pollution, wild- fires, and indoor cooking.
- **Volatile organic compounds** are linked to headaches, dizziness, and respiratory issues and are found in cleaning products, paints, air fresheners, furniture, and carpets.
- **Mold** can form anywhere there is water, from bathrooms to the inside of HVAC systems, and it can lead to respiratory infections and exacerbate asthma.

In addition to infection and exposure risks, indoor pollution can cause irritation, fatigue, and breathing difficulties, affecting residents' comfort and sleep. Studies also suggest a link between poor air quality and cognitive decline, including the progression of dementia.

Residents aren't the only ones affected. It also exposes staff to airborne illnesses, increases sick days, contributes to long-term health risks, and increases workload as staff care for residents who are sick.

**All of these health threats have two things in common:**

- 1) They are common in healthcare facilities, including nursing centers, and
- 2) They disproportionately impact older and chronically ill adults.

**The good news is that improving ventilation air filtration can address the negative impacts of every single health and comfort threat listed.**

Cleaner air helps prevent the spread of illness, protects residents with weakened immune systems, and supports long-term physical and cognitive health for residents and staff alike.

Healthier air leads to healthier residents, an essential measure of high-quality care. While ventilation and filtration upgrades can require up front investment, many of these upgrades are affordable and **cleaner air ultimately saves money** by reducing preventable medical expenses, reducing staff sick days, and turnover, and by making facilities more energy efficient.

The CDC recommends aiming for [five air changes per hour](#) to reduce the amount of viral particles and other risks in the air. Learn actions any facility can take (and how) to reach this goal and improve indoor air quality within a nursing center [here](#) reach this goal and improve indoor air quality within a nursing center [here](#).