Tacoma Pierce County Health Department—Healthy Actions at School

What's on your shoes?

Did you know that most soil and dust enters your home and work place via shoes, clothing and pets? Dust contains numerous contaminants including arsenic, lead, bacteria, PCBs, pesticides, and dust mites. It settles on windowsills, bookcases, and other hard surfaces, as well as upholstery and curtains. This dust is then inhaled or ingested in the air we breathe and the food we eat, making it a contributor to poor health.

The good news? Many things can be done to minimize the health risk from dust. By limiting contact with dust and soil and following these simple Healthy Actions, the risk of exposure to contaminants found in dust can be greatly reduced.

Healthy Actions

- **Use plenty of soap and water.** Encourage students to wash their hands with soap and warm water before eating and after playing in the soil. A scrub brush is a good way to clean dirt from under nails.
- **Stay in the play areas.** Designate a "play area" for your students. Providing clean soil or sand is a good alternative for those kids who like to dig in the dirt.
- **Wipe off your shoes.** Place a large "wipe-off" mat outside all entrances to the school and remind everyone to wipe off their shoes before coming inside. This will significantly reduce the amount of soil and dust brought into your school.
- **Throw it away.** Remind students to throw away candy, food, straws, and other items that fall to the ground (inside and outside.)
- **Pick up your stuff.** Keep rooms free of general clutter. Remove clutter from shelves and under the sink. Cluttered areas tend to be dusty places.
- **Mop, dust and vacuum.** Damp-mop and damp-dust floors, windowsills, bookcases and other surfaces frequently. Once a week is suggested.
- Vacuum carpeted areas and upholstered furniture several times a week. Using a bag designed to filter "allergens" or a HEPA filter (High Efficiency Particulate Arrestor) will reduce the amount of dust redistributed by the vacuum cleaner.
- Launder curtains if possible.
- **Keep rooms easy to clean.** Minimize hard to clean surfaces such as carpets, upholstered furniture, stuffed animals, fuzzy room dividers and similar objects made with plush materials.
- **Maintain school grounds.** Cover bare patches of soil with a ground cover such as grass, gravel or a wood/mulch product.

For more information, please contact the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department:

http://www.tpchd.org/environment/healthy-environment/dirt-alert/soil-testing-arsenic-lead/

(253) 798-3503

Email: arsenicproject@tpchd.org

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM