

Indoor Air Quality Dilemmas

This group-based discussion will get students to navigate different dilemmas that relate to indoor air quality.

Activity

Present these dilemmas. Discuss questions and solutions.

Dilemma #1

Susie has been learning about lead in her 5th grade class. Susie lives in an old home that has a lot of peeling paint, and her parents are talking about fixing up the house. Susie's mom is about to have another baby. Susie is worried about the lead paint hurting her mom and the new baby. What can Susie ask her family to do to help protect them?

Dilemma #2

Don puts together and paints model airplanes as a hobby. His parents complain that whenever he works on his airplanes, the house smells like glue and paint. What are some steps that Don can do to reduce the smell?

Dilemma #3

John has asthma. His family has two dogs and a cat. His house also has wall-to-wall carpeting in most rooms. What can John and his family do to keep his asthma from getting worse?

Solutions

Dilemma #1 - Solution

Susie and her family should have their home tested for lead-based paint. The family should contact their state housing department or local health department for information on how to get their home tested for lead. The family should not attempt to remove the paint on their own. Only certified lead removal technicians should perform lead removal tasks. In the meantime, the family (especially children under 6 years of age and pregnant women) can follow some simple precautions to help reduce the risk of lead poisoning:

- Eat a diet high in iron and calcium. These minerals help reduce the amount of lead that is absorbed into the body.
- Wash hands before mealtime and bedtime.
- Wash floors, window ledges, and chewable surfaces with soap and water.
- Remove shoes when entering the home.
- Vacuum and damp dust weekly.
- Contact the National Lead Information Center at (800) 424-LEAD for more information on lead.

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Dilemma #2 - Solution

Don should open some windows when he works on his models. He should also try to work away from living areas of the home, in the basement or garage, if possible. Less toxic alternatives to the glue and paint may be available at hobby shops.

Dilemma #3 - Solution

John and his family should do the following:

- Regularly consult with John's doctor or allergist about his asthma.
- Vacuum and damp dust at least weekly. Empty the vacuum bag frequently.
- Groom pets daily to reduce shedding.
- Bathe dogs regularly with warm water and a good shampoo. Bathe cats with plain water every few weeks.
- Keep pets out of John's room and off furniture.
- Wash John's bedding weekly in 130°F water.