

ALLERGY INSPECTION in SCHOOLS

The checklist for allergy inspection in schools
has been drawn up by the Asthma-Allergy Association in Stockholm County
in collaboration with the National Institute of Public Health.

ALLERGY INSPECTION in SCHOOLS

Allergy – the epidemic of our time

Allergies are increasing at an alarming rate, mainly among children. Four out of ten school children in Sweden have, or have had, some form of allergy/hypersensitivity.

Factors in the indoor environment are considered to be a contributory cause

Tobacco smoke, pollutants from materials and activities, moisture, poor ventilation, sub-standard cleaning, and so on, are some of the factors which cause allergies to increase and to become increasingly serious in nature.

Checklist for allergy inspections

– a tool for the improvement of the indoor environment

We all need help in trying to prevent more children contracting allergy and in alleviating the symptoms of those who have already been affected. There is now a tool available, in the form of a checklist, which will help you in your working environment activity in school to bring about an environment that is as free of allergy as possible. This checklist is an aid for a quick and easy overview of where the risks are to be found and what must be put right.

Make an allergy inspection in your school using the checklist

Those taking part in the allergy inspection should be the headmaster, *safety officer*, *school nurse* and *pupils' safety representative*. As the person responsible for working environment activity in the school, the headmaster should be the convener. In the Junior School, a representative of the *Home and School Association* should also take part. The *person responsible for the building* should take part in relation to indoor climate and ventilation. The *school catering staff* should take part in relation to food, and the *person responsible for cleaning* in relation to janitorial duties. Pupils (the parents of small children) and staff with serious allergy should be given the opportunity to present their views regarding the factors that affect their environment.

This is how the checklist is to be used

Fill in the checklist as you are making the allergy inspection. It has questions regarding those factors which have an effect on the indoor environment and may cause allergies. Put a cross in the yes or no space. If the answer is put at the right, next to the arrow, a risk has been identified. Continue putting down what must be done under 'Measure', who is responsible to ensure that this is carried out, and when it is to be finished by. The checklist covers the most important factors, but not all of them. There may be staff members or pupils with special susceptibilities who need further remedial measures. If you find any other risks in the environment, put these down under the heading 'Other observations'.

Draw up action plans for improving the environment

Use the checklist as the basis in discussing what must be done. Draw up action plans for the remedial measures, with a clear division of responsibility and a time schedule for implementation. Summarise these plans in an 'Action Programme for Allergy Issues'. Some measures can be done quickly, others require a long term approach. It is important to discuss and clarify issues to do with attitudes, such as smoking, furry animals, perfumes etc. One way is to discuss these issues at special topic days at school. Ask the school health service, pharmacy, local allergy association or others with interest in, and knowledge of, allergy to come along and help.

Follow up the remedial measures

It is best to make the allergy inspection a regular annual feature in order that a good overview may be obtained of the work on improving the environment. Make sure that the proposed measures are really carried out to make the school more and more allergy proof.

Get to know more about allergy and the significance of the environment

The allergy inspection should be combined with greater knowledge of allergy and the factors in the environment which cause allergy. Pupils and teachers should be informed about allergy, the significance of the environment and our lifestyles, and what we can all do to ensure that the environment at school is as allergy proof as possible.

You can get in touch with the Environmental Health Office and the Occupational Health Service in your municipality for advice. Help can also be obtained from the allergy committee or allergy representative from the local Asthma Association.

CHECKLIST FOR ALLERGY INSPECTION AT SCHOOL

Allergy prevention work in the 9 year comprehensive school and the upper secondary school

Date:

School:.....

Those taking part:

.....

*Use this checklist for **the allergy inspection once a year**. Answer the questions by putting **a cross after Yes or No**. If the answer is put at the right, next to the arrow, continue and fill in what must be done, who is responsible for getting it done, and when it is to be finished.*

HEALTH

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Are there symptoms such as irritations in the eyes, nose or throat, headaches, tiredness to a large extent? No Yes →

Has a questionnaire survey been held? Yes No →

If symptoms and complaints about dry air, smells, poor ventilation etc are usual, a questionnaire survey should be held using e.g. the Örebro questionnaire for the indoor environment (Clinic of Occupational Medicine, Örebro) or the Stockholm City School Questionnaire.

How many allergic persons are there at the school?

Has the staff concerned good knowledge of what pupils with serious allergy must avoid to feel well? Yes No →

Do the staff concerned know what they must do if pupils have serious allergic reactions e.g. asthma attack or allergic shock? Yes No →

Knowledge of medication, crisis plan.

Teachers should know about and be able to administer medication for seriously allergic children (especially in the junior and middle schools)

Are allergic pupils informed of occupations which pose a risk? Yes No →

Medical School Careers Adviser (school health service, school careers adviser)

Are pupils informed of the risk of developing nickel allergy when ears are pierced and jewellery/metals are worn next to the skin? Yes No →

School health service

Other observations:

INDOOR CLIMATE, MOISTURE

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

 Is the indoor temperature satisfactory?

Yes No →

If not, is it too high, too low or uneven?

Where?

Should not be over 22°C!

 Is any moisture damage suspected?

No Yes →

If yes, where?

*E.g. discoloured stains/visible mould on floor/ceiling/walls, blisters in floor covering, smells.**Roof, attic and crawling spaces should be regularly checked!**There should be procedures for rapid fault reporting to the person responsible for the building!*

 Is there a strange/annoying smell

anywhere in the premises? No Yes →

If yes, what?

and where?

Always find the cause of bad smells and eliminate.
*Regularly clean floor gulleys and make sure that traps at the head of unused drains are filled with water.**Organic materials (cloth, wood, paper, leather) must not be stored in rooms where humidity is high, e.g. unheated basements.*

If new fittings, furnishings or furniture are to be bought:
Demand that emission (chemical outgassing) from materials is at low level, e.g. plasticisers in floor coverings, formaldehyde in wood chipboard (furniture).

 Other observations:

VENTILATION

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

 Has obligatory functional check on ventilation
been carried out? Yes No →
Must be made every other year. Certificate to be displayed in a prominent place in the building.

Have any defects found been

put right? Yes No →

 Is it suspected that ventilation is still
not satisfactory? No Yes →

If yes, where?

If ventilation is perceived as unsatisfactory, request checks on air flow rates, supply air temperature, carbon dioxide content/moisture load in the room

 Are chemistry laboratories equipped
with properly working fume cupboards?

Yes No →

 Are woodworking shops equipped
with satisfactory sawdust extractors?

Yes No →

 If there is a smoking room, has it separate
extract ventilation? Yes No →

Is it adequate? Yes No →

continuing VENTILATION

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

If there is a supply air filter, is it
changed often enough? Yes No →

Is ventilation properly operated
and maintained? Yes No →

*Remember an old, well tried and tested ventilation method: OPEN WINDOWS!
Pupils should go outside during breaks!*

Other observations:

SMOKING

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Is applicable tobacco law known and observed?
 Yes No →

The goal is that nobody should be exposed to tobacco smoke against their wish.

Is there a smell of smoke in the air where
there should not be? No Yes →

Bear in mind that the smell of smoke in clothes, hair and breath can also cause distress!

Are pupils informed of the risks of allergy due
to smoking and passive smoking?
 Yes No →

Are smoking habits of pupils monitored?
 Yes No →

Other observations:

FURRY ANIMALS

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Has any general information been given on
how important it is to change clothes, to
shower and wash the hair after riding,
and not to go to school in clothes that
have been in direct contact with furry
animals? Yes No →

Are there rules/recommendations for this
that everybody knows about?
 Yes No →

*There must be no furry animals or birds in the school. Nor riding clothes.
Keep any stuffed animals in cupboards with doors!*

Are there separate, well ventilated
cupboards for clothes? Yes No →

Do not keep outdoor clothes in the classroom!

Other observations:

PERFUMES

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Has there been any general information on what significance perfumes, hair sprays etc have for allergies? Yes No →

Are there rules/recommendations for this that everybody knows about? Yes No →

Avoid all strong scents!

Other observations:

PLANTS

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Are there allergenic/poisonous plants? No Yes →

Avoid scented and flowering plants, and do not bring in branches of birch and willow! Be sparing with potted plants in the classroom!

What is the outdoor environment like? Is there birch, hazelnut, willow, lilac, balsam poplar, spiraea, jasmine, right outside the window or near the air intake? No Yes →

Pollen and strong scents are a source of great discomfort to many allergic persons.

Other observations:

FOOD

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

Are the school catering staff aware how important it is that allergic persons do not eat anything they do not tolerate? Yes No →

The school catering staff must be very knowledgeable about the various food allergies/hypersensitivities which occur in the school. Ask a dietician to help.

Are there routines for responsibility and handling as regards special foods for allergic persons? Yes No →

Are there routines, so that temporary staff can also observe these, e.g. lists of what allergic pupils do not tolerate? Yes No →

Very small quantities can cause reactions (even life threatening reactions). Even the smell of fish etc may cause discomfort. Be aware of cross-reactivity, e.g. birch pollen-nuts, stone fruits; peanuts-soya protein; mugwort-celery, kiwi, paprika.

Are there nuts/peanuts in school food? No Yes →

Avoid all kinds of nuts! NOTE that there might be nuts in bread, salads, muesli, etc!

Other observations:

JANITORIAL SERVICES

Measure?

Person responsible?

When to be finished?

 Is cleaning satisfactory in

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|----|---|
| - classrooms | Yes | No | → |
| - gymnasium? | Yes | No | → |
| - changing rooms? | Yes | No | → |
| - woodworking shop? | Yes | No | → |
| - needlework room? | Yes | No | → |
| - corridors, entrances? | Yes | No | → |

Also after premises had been let for other purposes?	Yes	No	→
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If the premises are used in the evening, they should be cleaned twice a day!

Are all cleaning staff familiar with cleaning schedule?	Yes	No	→
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There should be a cleaning schedule for every room.

Is the floor in classrooms, corridors etc cleaned every day with a good method?	Yes	No	→
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Floors should be mopped with clean implements and with a method that collects dust well (e.g. damp or electrostatic, not too wet). Cleaning methods that spread dust into the air (sweeping, vacuum cleaning with an old machine) should be avoided. Central vacuum installation or a vacuum cleaner with a special filter is better. If possible, do not carry out cleaning while school activity is taking place!

Are other horizontal surfaces such as tables, chairs, shelves, window sillsetc dusted at least once a week?	Yes	No	→
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Are even secluded spaces cleaned regularly?	Yes	No	→
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Cushions and mattresses should have detachable covers which are washed regularly

Is major cleaning carried out at least once a year?	Yes	No	→
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Does this include:

- washing/changing textiles e.g. curtains, carpets etc? Yes No →
- cleaning of extract terminals and washing of ceiling/walls around supply terminals? Yes No →
- cleaning of lighting fittings? Yes No →

Is the floor cleared of chairs, bags, shoes, flexes, major litter etc when it is to be cleaned?	Yes	No	→
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If possible, do not have outdoor shoes in the classroom!

continuing JANITORIAL SERVICES Measure? Person responsible? When to be finished?

Is material not in use at present cleared away? Yes No →

Material should be kept in cupboards with doors

Are there fitted textile carpets/untreated woven fabric on the walls? No Yes →
If yes, where?

*Should be replaced/painted.
Avoid also loose textile carpets.*

Are only unscented cleaning and floor care chemicals used? Yes No →

Is there an unpleasant smell after linoleum mats have been cleaned with a mop? No Yes →

*If yes, a new coat of beeswax is needed.
NOTE! Do not use alkaline cleaners on linoleum!
If the floor covering is dusting, it needs a new surface.*

When furniture is bought, attention should be paid to its cleanability so that an environment as easy to clean as possible is achieved. For instance, cupboards should extend from the floor right up to the ceiling.

Other observations:

ACTION PROGRAM for ALLERGY ISSUES

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School/Preschool

I have been taking part in the allergy inspection

Name

Date

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National Institute of Public Health

S-103 52 Stockholm, Sweden. Office: Olof Palmes gata 17
Telephone: +46 8 5661 35 00. Fax: +46 8 5661 35 05
www.fhi.se

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