Improving your indoor air quality: Suggested talking points

- **Improving indoor air can protect against COVID-19 and other health hazards.**
  - Viruses like COVID-19 spread more easily indoors because there is less ventilation.
  - Pollutants like dust, wildfire smoke, and nitrogen dioxide from cooking can also build up indoors and become health hazards.
  - The CDC recommends replacing the air in a room at least five times an hour to reduce the amount of germs in a space.
  - There are two ways to improve indoor air quality: through ventilation (circulating outdoor air into a closed space) and through filtration (removing unwanted particles from the air).

- **Ventilation can help reduce the concentration of unwanted particles in the air.**
  - Opening the windows is the simplest ventilation tool. You can get more consistent air flow by setting up a fan in front of the window, facing outward.
  - But opening the windows only works if the air outside is healthy. If the outdoor air quality is poor, keep the windows closed and opt for air filtration tools.
  - CO2 monitors can be used to understand how well-ventilated a space is. If CO2 levels exceed what's considered normal for your space or 800 parts per million, you may need to increase ventilation or air cleaning.

- **Air filtration tools like Corsi-Rosenthal boxes and air purifiers can clean the air in your space and help protect against COVID-19.**
  - The Corsi-Rosenthal box is an easy, cost-effective air filtration tool that you can build yourself as a temporary measure. It cleans the air in a room by trapping unwanted particles—including viruses, dust, and wildfire smoke—in its MERV filters.
  - Air purifiers with HEPA filters are the preferred filtration tool and should be used whenever possible. They work like Corsi-Rosenthal boxes but are typically better at trapping particles and have established standards for air quality.
  - Your HVAC system can also help clean the air in your home, but you may need to upgrade the filters to MERV-13 or HEPA so that the system is able to trap more particles.
  - Remember to replace the filters in the devices and systems you use every few months to ensure that they work properly.

Improving your indoor air quality: Frequently asked questions

1. **How can I reduce the spread of COVID-19, other viruses, and pollutants at indoor gatherings this summer?**

As heat waves or pollutants such as wildfire smoke drive us indoors this summer, it's important to take care of the air quality in our homes and the places we gather. Increasing ventilation can help reduce the concentration of particles in the air, including COVID-19 and other viruses and pollutants. The simplest way to improve ventilation is by opening the windows. You can get more consistent air flow by setting up a fan in front of the window, facing outward. Additionally, CO_2 monitors are a tool that, if used correctly, can help assess if there is good ventilation in an indoor space. While a target CO_2 level depends on each space, one possible indicator of good ventilation is if CO_2 levels are under 800 parts per million.

2. **What if I can't open the windows because it's too hot or the air outside is unhealthy?**

Sometimes, you may find that opening the windows isn't an option. If this is the case, you can improve indoor air by using filtration tools. Even if you can open the windows, it's still smart to take advantage of filtration tools to better clean the air in your space. One such tool is the Corsi-Rosenthal box, an easy, cost-effective option that you can build yourself as a temporary intervention. It cleans the air in a room by trapping unwanted particles, including viruses, dust, and wildfire smoke, in its MERV filters. Air purifiers with HEPA filters are the preferred filtration tool and should be used whenever possible. They work like Corsi-Rosenthal boxes but are typically better at trapping particles and have established standards for air quality. Finally, your HVAC system can also help clean the air in your home, but you may need to upgrade the filters to MERV-13 or HEPA so that the system is able to trap more particles. It's important to replace the filters in the devices and systems you use every few months to ensure that they remain effective.

3. **How effective are masks against COVID-19 and wildfire smoke?**

The effectiveness of masks really depends on the type of mask you wear. If worn correctly, high-quality masks such as N95s and KN95s can protect you against COVID-19 and wildfire smoke. Studies have shown that masks can significantly reduce the number of COVID-19 virus particles you inhale, which in turn can lower your chance of getting infected. While no mask is perfect, high-quality ones can make a big difference in how much you are exposed to potential health hazards.