New CDC ventilation recommendations: Suggested talking points

- **The CDC set a first-ever target for how much ventilation a building should have to prevent virus spread.**
  - The CDC's Ventilation in Buildings guidance includes recommendations on how much ventilation is needed indoors.
  - The agency recommends at least 5 air changes per hour (ACH) of clean air to "help reduce the number of germs in the air." In an op-ed about the news, Joseph G. Allen, a Harvard University professor, explained that the goal is to replace the air in a room five or more times an hour. To put it in context, he said a typical home has less than 0.5 ACH.
  - It's the first time in history that the agency set a specific ventilation target to prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses.

- **Improving ventilation indoors can help reduce the spread of COVID-19.**
  - The updated guidance is especially important as we enter a new stage of the pandemic following the end of the country's COVID-19 public health emergency.
  - The new recommendation will help prevent the indoor spread of COVID-19, other airborne viruses like the flu, and hazards like wildfire smoke.
  - Ventilation mitigation strategies can help reduce the concentration of viral particles in the air. The lower the concentration, the less likely the viral particles can be inhaled into the lungs; reach the eyes, the mouth, and the nose; or accumulate on surfaces.

- **There are many easy ways to improve air circulation and cleanliness indoors.**
  - The CDC's guidance offers a detailed list of ways to improve air quality indoors.
  - Open windows (when the weather allows) to increase outdoor air flow.
  - Use a window fan to "exhaust room air to the outdoors."
  - To improve air cleanliness, the CDC suggests inspecting HVAC systems and using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

New CDC ventilation recommendations: Frequently asked questions

1. **What updates did the CDC make to existing guidance on ventilation in buildings?**

On May 12, the CDC updated its Ventilation in Buildings guidance to include, for the first time ever, a target for how much rooms and buildings should be ventilated. The agency now recommends at least 5 air changes per hour (ACH) of clean air to reduce the number of germs in a space. The agency added that "this can be achieved through any combination of central ventilation system, natural ventilation, or additional devices that provide equivalent ACH to your existing ventilation." The extensive guidance also provides a list of ways to improve air circulation and cleanliness in a space.

2. **What does this mean in the new stage of the pandemic?**

The updated guidance is especially important as we enter a new stage of the pandemic following the end of the country's COVID-19 public health emergency. Air quality experts say that having a target for air ventilation is a historic move that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 as well as other respiratory illnesses like the flu and hazards like wildfire smoke. "It's a monumental shift," said Joseph G. Allen, a Harvard University professor and director of the Harvard Healthy Buildings Program, to CNN. "We haven't had health-based ventilation standards." The new recommendations underscore the importance of air quality in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

3. **What are some ways I can improve ventilation in indoor spaces?**

Some of the methods the CDC outlines in its guidance to improve air circulation include opening windows (when the weather allows) and using a window fan to "exhaust room air to the outdoors." Additionally, to improve air cleanliness, the agency suggests upgrading the central HVAC filter efficiency to a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV)-13 or better and using high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters (or air purifiers). Find the full list of ventilation mitigation strategies, including cost considerations for each, here.