



PREVENTING ASTHMA

A Landlord's Guide to Property Maintenance for Healthy Homes

Asthma is one of the most common childhood chronic diseases. In 2001, it affected over 6 million children under the age of 18 in the United States. One study found that 14% of Detroit elementary school students have been diagnosed with asthma. Another 14% of students have asthma symptoms without a diagnosis. Maintaining a healthy home can reduce triggers of asthma symptoms. Landlords and tenants both have responsibilities to maintain healthy homes. Both will benefit from living in and renting healthy spaces.

What triggers asthma?

Asthma can be triggered by both indoor and outdoor factors. Indoor asthma triggers include:

- Mold
- Cracks in the home that allow outside asthma triggers to move indoors
- Pests, such as cockroaches and dust mites

Outdoor asthma triggers include:

- Pollen
- Dust
- Diesel Exhaust
- Ozone

How can maintaining a healthy home benefit landlords?

- **Increase Durability** – Watching for health risks may also alert you to signs of increased wear and tear on systems (heating and cooling) and hidden structural damage (wood rot and mold).
- **Reduce Cost** - Replacing or fixing systems when the problems are smaller can save you money. A small water leak can be quickly repaired, or it can grow into larger mold and rotting problems.
- **Improve Resident Health** - Home conditions can both cause and trigger asthma and allergies. Unhealthy tenants may miss work or rent payments.
- **Reduce Liability** - Addressing potential health hazards in your buildings can reduce the likelihood of costly lawsuits and code violations.

Resources: Asthma Regional Council, "Property Maintenance for a Healthy Home" (2003).

What can landlords do?

Check the following items twice a year and when new tenants move in:

- **Moisture** - Check for water stains and wet spots under windows and near doors, near appliances, and around toilets, tubs, and showers.
- **Cleanable Surfaces** - Check for dust, debris, mold, and conditions that make it hard to clean a surface. This includes checking for damage to floor coverings and carpet. If possible, clean the carpets in each unit twice a year.
- **Ventilation** – Check that the air conditioning and heat work properly. Make sure all windows open easily. Check that bath and kitchen ventilate outside. Change heating and air conditioning filters every 6 months.
- **Pests** -- Check for evidence of insects or rodent droppings. Check for holes that would let insects or rodents to enter the building. If extermination is needed, use Integrated Pest Management for a non-toxic alternative to traditional techniques.

Landlord Information Sources

- Detroit Building, Safety, and Engineering Department: (313) 224-3105
- Health Department: (313) 876-4516
- Detroit Planning and Development website: www.ci.detroit.mi.us/plandevl

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