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Will removing carpet help with allergies?

One of the approaches used by allergists is dust/allergen avoidance in the belief that the removal of all possible places where allergens occur will reduce allergic symptoms. Research shows that dust/allergen falling onto the surface of carpet will remain there and will not be easily resuspended by ordinary activities. Removing the dust/allergen can be accomplished by using an effective vacuum cleaner (CRI IAQ labeled) and routine cleaning

Removing carpet will not reduce the number of airborne allergens that produce allergic reactions; in fact, removal of carpet may actually increase the amount of airborne allergen, because smooth surfaces do not offer the capability of holding allergen and the dust is easily re-suspended into the breathing zone.

What about the vacuuming routine?

Allergens are easily removed from carpet and floors by regular vacuuming with an effective vacuum cleaner. CRI recommends vacuuming floor coverings in the home at least once a week--high use areas should be vacuumed twice weekly. If you have pets, you may need to vacuum some areas daily. Vacuum upholstered furniture and mattresses on a regular schedule.

Mary Lasley, a pediatric allergist, explains, "Simple changes in your routine house cleaning can reduce allergies and help your family live more comfortably. Removing dust and soil often from all surfaces is a key element in maintaining good indoor air quality."

The CRI developed an easy way to ensure that you are purchasing a vacuum cleaner that performs to the industry's standards when it introduced the Indoor Air Quality Vacuum Cleaner Testing Program. The program helps consumers identify vacuum cleaner models that have been evaluated by an independent testing laboratory and meet standards for soil removal, dust containment, and carpet appearance retention.

The listing of approved vacuum cleaners (including residential, commercial, backpack models, and central systems) appears on the CRI website, www.carpet-rug.com.

Common Sense Procedures for Installing New Carpet

In general, follow the same common sense ventilation precautions used when doing any renovation.

- Install a carpet with CRI's Indoor Air Quality Carpet Testing Program label, indicating that this product has been tested and meets the low VOC emissions criteria.
- Choose a cushion that displays the CRI Indoor Air Quality Cushion Testing Program label, indicating that it meets the low VOC emissions criteria.
- If the carpet is to be glued down, use an adhesive displaying the CRI's Indoor Air Quality Adhesive Testing Program label, indicating that it meets the low VOC emissions criteria.
- To minimize airborne dust, vacuum the old carpet thoroughly prior to removal, and vacuum the floor after the old carpet and cushion have been removed. (Use a CRI IAQ labeled vacuum cleaner.)
- Ventilate with fresh air (open windows, operate a fan, and/or run the fan of the heat/air system) during the old carpet removal and the new carpet installation and for 48 to 72 hours after installation.
- Use a professional installer, preferrably one who displays the Seal of Approval, and confirm that the minimum industry-accepted installation standards, CRI 104 and/or CRI 105, are followed.
- Plan and implement a scheduled maintenance program that includes vacuuming regularly (weekly) with a CRI IAQ labeled vacuum cleaner and extraction cleaning (about once a year in a residence).

Keeping Your Home and Your Carpet Environmentally Friendly

The most important elements in avoiding dust and maintaining good air quality in a home are to remove dust and soil often from all surfaces, wash bedding frequently in very hot water, maintain the well-functioning heat and air system with effective, clean filters, and maintain a relative humidity at or below 65%.

Regular carpet maintenance is essential to preserve the carpet's initial appearance and to help with maintaining good air quality.

- Vacuum clean regularly--at least twice weekly in high-use areas and weekly in other areas.
- Use an effective, well-functioning vacuum cleaner that has strong air flow, adjustable brushes, and an enclosed high-efficiency filtration bag--a CRI Indoor Air Quality labeled product. Change the disposable bag regularly (or clean the permananent one), and replace worn belts.
- Clean spots and spills promptly and thoroughly to avoid permanent stains.
- Have carpet extraction-cleaned professionally on a regular schedule, before soiling appears, or at least every twelve to eighteen months. When cleaning, it is most important that all of the moisture, cleaning agent, and soil be extracted from the carpet. Ventilate during the cleaning process and afterwards for several hours. Ensure that carpet is completely dry within twelve hours to discourage fungal growth.
- Place door mats or rugs at the entrances of your home. This will help catch "tracked-in" dirt and will keep contaminants from spreading throughout your home.

The *Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI)* is the national trade association representing carpet and rug manufacturers and suppliers of raw materials and services to the industry. CRI offers extensive consumer, media, and technical information about carpet and rugs.

Questions? Comments?

Access our web site at www.carpet-rug.com

ISBN# 0-89275-036-7

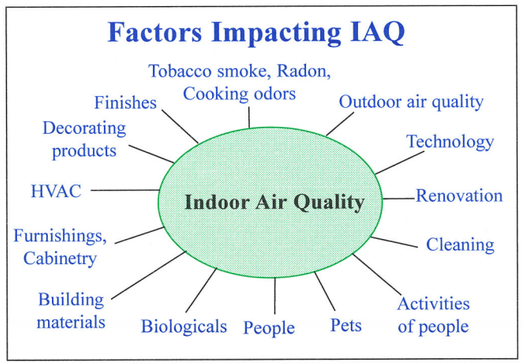
CRI

Carpet and Your Indoor Environment

What factors affect indoor air quality?

Today, indoor air quality (IAQ) is an important environmental consideration for Americans. Because we spend approximately 90 percent of our time indoors, we must do everything possible to improve the air we breathe. During the energy crisis of the '70s, Americans began to tightly close their workplaces and homes in order to conserve energy resources. This diminished fresh air ventilation. Adding to the situation, many families have less time now for cleaning in the home, and workplace maintenance has declined. Ventilation and cleanliness play major roles in maintaining good indoor air quality, although the indoor environment is impacted by many factors.

Among the factors that may impact the quality of the indoor air in your home is the air from outside. All interior products in the home have the potential to impact the indoor air because they emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) into the air.



One must look at the whole picture. Cleaning products, building materials, interior furnishings and finshes, should be low VOC emitters, with emissions, sometimes improperly called off-gassing, that dissipate quickly. Scientific studies have demonstrated that new carpet is one of the lowest emitters of VOCs into the indoor environment and that these emissions dissipate very quickly. The low-level VOC emissions and the harmless odor from new carpet dissipate within the first 48 to 72 hours after installation.

Can carpet affect a person's health?

The carpet industry has worked very closely with academic institutions, the government, and independent laboratories to evaluate carpet's role in the indoor environment. Throughout those evaluations, scientific evidence has indicated no links of adverse human health effects to VOC emissions from carpet. Although it is highly unlikely you will experience any effects from your new carpet, some individuals have reported allergy-like symptoms after new carpet has been installed. Some of these reports investigated by the CPSC resulted in a conclusion that it "could not establish a cause and effect relationship between the carpet and health effects experienced."

Carpet is made primarily of the same innocuous materials found in clothing and other everyday fabrics; i.e., polyester, nylon, and olefin fibers, latex (synthetic rubber), and polypropylene (olefin) fabric backing. Carpet is not a hazard. Carpet has been a comfortable asset in homes and workplaces for millions of satisfied customers.

Is carpet an emitting product?

New carpet is a very low emitter. As with most other indoor products, choosing a low-emitting product, ventilating, and cleaning are the keys to good air quality.

How long do new carpet emissions last?

New carpet's emission level will drop significantly within the first 24 hours of installation, and with fresh air ventilation, the emission level will dissipate to an undetectable level within 48 to 72 hours.

What is the "new carpet" odor that sometimes is present after the installation?

The odor, when present, comes from 4-phenylcyclohexene (4-PC), a by-product of the latex binder used to hold the fibers and backing together. It, like a "new car" odor, will dissipate within a few days and is not harmful.

How do I know which carpet, cushion, or adhesive has been tested for emissions?

Look for and purchase a carpet, cushion, or floor covering adhesive that displays the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Indoor Air Quality Testing label. These three indoor air quality testing programs identify the carpet, cushion, or adhesive that has been tested and meets stringent indoor air quality requirements for very low emissions. The programs cover carpet, carpet cushion, and floor covering installation adhesives.

How do the IAQ testing programs work?

In the testing programs for carpet, separate carpet cushion, and floor covering adhesives, samples are collected, and each sample is tested individually for chemical emissions by an independent laboratory, using a dynamic, environmental chamber and highly sophisticated, scientific analytical technology. Volatile organic compound emissions are identified and quantified as though the products were in a real building indoor environment. Products that meet the emission criteria are allowed to display the label and are retested on an ongoing basis to ensure compliance.

In each of these programs, the authorized label displayed on the product contains an identification number assigned specifically to the individual manufacturer for each product type that meets the criteria.

Regarding indoor air quality, is there any difference between natural and synthetic fibers?

No. All types of carpet have very low emission levels, regardless of whether they are natural or synthetic fibers.

What can I do to minimize possible exposure to emissions?

Always choose carpet, cushion, and adhesives that display the CRI Indoor Air Quality Testing label. Before carpet is installed, ensure that the installer will follow the installation guidelines (CRI 105 or CRI 104) established by the Carpet and Rug Institute. Follow the installation guidelines, common sense procedures, and the recommendations for keeping your home environmentally friendly -- at the end of this brochure.

I have an allergy to natural latex. Will new carpet cause a problem for me?

Latex used to bond carpet fibers and the backing fabrics together is made from a synthetic latex, "SB latex" or styrene butadiene latex. SB latex is a synthetic, water emulsion made from compounds different from those found in natural latex. Latex allergies are the results of protein enzymes in natural latex. SB latex used in carpet does not cause the allergic, dermatological reaction associated with natural latex. Some bath mats or small rugs may have a natural latex backing to prevent the rug from moving on a floor.

Does new carpet contain formaldehyde?

No. Formaldehyde is not used in the carpet manufacturing process in the United States. Sometimes, formaldehyde can be found in old carpet and other home textiles that have absorbed formaldehyde from other environmental sources.

What about dust mites in the home?

Most mite allergen (feces and body parts) is found in bedding and upholstered furniture (80%); less is found in carpet (20%). Exposure to mite allergen usually occurs while sleeping, sitting, or through direct surface contact with the allergen itself. Carpet holds this allergen, but mite allergen is relatively large and is not easily released from carpet into the air, even during periods of heavy activity.

Maintaining relative humidity levels below 65%, encasing mattresses and pillows, frequently laundering bedding in hot water, and regular vacuuming and cleaning of all surfaces will minimize the mite population and dust mite allergen in your home.