

What Every Tenant Should Know About Indoor Allergens (Local Law 55 of 2018)

Allergens are things in the environment that make indoor air quality worse. They can cause asthma attacks or make asthma symptoms worse. Common indoor allergens, or triggers, include cockroaches and mice; mold and mildew; and chemicals with strong smells, like some cleaning products. Environmental and structural conditions, like leaks and cracks in walls often found in poorly maintained housing, lead to higher levels of allergens.

New York City law requires that landlords take steps to keep their tenants' homes free of pests and mold. This includes safely fixing the conditions that cause these problems. Tenants also play a role in preventing indoor allergens.

Tenants should:

- Keep homes clean and dry
- Place food in sealed containers, keep counters and sinks clean, and get rid of clutter such as newspapers and paper bags
- Use garbage cans with tight-fitting lids
- Take garbage and recycling out every day, and tie up garbage bags before putting them in compactor chutes
- Avoid using pesticides and chemicals with strong smells (e.g., cleaning products, air fresheners, etc.)
- Tell landlords right away if there are pests, water leaks, or holes or cracks in the walls and floors
- Let building staff into homes to make any needed repairs
- Call **311** if landlords do not fix the problem or if repair work is being done unsafely

If you are a tenant and you or your child has asthma, and there are pests or mold in your home, your doctor can request a free home environmental inspection for you through the New York City Health Department's Online Registry. Talk to your doctor or call 311 to learn more.

For more information about building owner and landlord responsibilities and safely fixing indoor allergen hazards, see the reverse side of this handout.

For more information about safely controlling asthma, visit nyc.gov/health/asthma.

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What Landlords Must Do to Keep Homes Free of Pests and Mold

New York City law requires that landlords of buildings with three or more apartments – or buildings of any size where a tenant has asthma – take steps to keep tenant homes free of pests and mold. This includes safely fixing the conditions that cause these problems.

Landlords must:

- **Inspect** every apartment and the building’s common areas for cockroach and rodent infestations, mold and the conditions that lead to these hazards, at least once a year and more often if necessary. Landlords must also respond to tenant complaints or requests for an inspection.
- **Use integrated pest management (IPM) practices** to safely control pests and fix building-related issues that lead to pest problems.
 - ✓ Remove pest nests and thoroughly clean pest waste and other debris using a HEPA vacuum. Make sure to limit the spread of dust when cleaning.
 - ✓ Repair and seal any holes, gaps or cracks in walls, ceilings, floors, molding, base boards, around pipes and conduits, and around and within cabinets.
 - ✓ Attach door sweeps to all doors that lead to hallways, basements or outside.
 - ✓ Remove all water sources for pests by repairing drains, faucets and other plumbing materials that collect water or leak.
 - ✓ Use pesticides sparingly. If pesticides must be used to correct a violation, they must be applied by a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation–licensed pest professional.
- **Remove indoor mold** and safely fix the problems that cause mold.
 - ✓ Remove any standing water, and fix leaks or moisture conditions.
 - ✓ Move or cover furniture, and seal off doorways, ventilation ducts and other openings securely with plastic sheeting.
 - ✓ Gently spray the moldy area with soap or detergent and water before cleaning to limit the spread of dust.
 - ✓ Clean the work area with wet mops or HEPA vacuums before work starts, at the end of each day and after all repair work is completed.
 - ✓ Dry the cleaned area completely.
 - ✓ Throw away all cleaning-related waste in heavy-duty plastic bags and seal securely.
 - ✓ To clean 10 or more square feet of mold in a building with 10 or more apartments, landlords **must** hire a New York State Department of Labor–licensed mold assessor and remediator. Per New York City Administrative Code section 24-154 and New York State Labor Law Article 32, assessors and remediators must submit paperwork to the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.
- Make sure vacant apartments are thoroughly **cleaned and free of pests and mold** before a new tenant moves in.
- Provide a copy of this fact sheet and a notice with each tenant’s lease that clearly states the landlord’s and tenant’s responsibilities to keep the building free of indoor allergens.

For more information about building owner and landlord responsibilities and safely fixing indoor allergen hazards, visit nyc.gov/hpd and search for **indoor allergen hazards**.

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