HEALTHY BUILDINGS FOR HEALTH

HARVARD T.H. CHAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

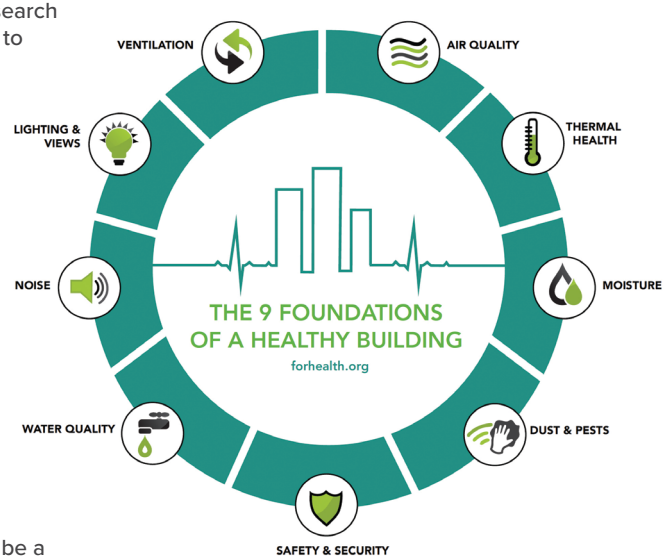
Humans spend about 90 percent of their time indoors. As a result, our health is directly tied to the health of our buildings. Yet many buildings are not designed or operated with a focus on the health of those within the built environment.

The mission of the Healthy Buildings Program is to improve the lives of all people, in buildings and beyond, everywhere, every day. Our program aims to harness the power of research, business collaboration, and common-sense messaging to advance solutions for human health within the built environment. The team creates user-friendly tools, resources, guides, and calculators to empower people to apply the latest research on healthy building solutions to their everyday lives.

"Building engineers and facilities managers are the true heroes of our health."

Dr. Joseph Allen, Director of the Healthy Buildings Program.

Healthy buildings are optimized to enhance occupant health, well-being, and productivity. **The 9 Foundations of a Healthy Building** define clear and actionable core elements that make up a healthy indoor environment. Whether in homes, schools, or offices, how we design, maintain, and operate facilities can lead to a safer, more productive, and more equitable world.



Healthy buildings should not be a privilege confined to a select few but the new norm. 75% of the infrastructure needed by 2050 has not yet been built. Hence, the decisions we make today regarding our built environment will determine our collective health for generations.

Learn more about the Harvard Healthy Buildings Program at **forhealth.org**

HEALTH AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The team's research centers around six primary areas that make up a healthy environment.

HOMES

Our home is the place where we spend most of our time – even more so with hybrid work transforming our four walls into offices. The team has developed in-depth reports for healthier home tips and is leading cutting-edge research about how the indoor air quality of homes can be harnessed for productivity, well-being, and health.

SCHOOLS

School buildings impact students health, thinking, and performance during critical physiological, social, and emotional growth and development. The team's work answers vital questions about environmental and contextual factors that influence chronic absenteeism, academic performance, and health indicators.

BUSINESS

A healthy working environment is becoming a key differentiator for businesses as they work to build resilient, health-focused organizations. Consequently, business leaders must incorporate healthy buildings into their sustainability strategies. Providing a healthy workplace is a way to attract and retain top talents, improve their health, and enhance productivity.

MATERIALS

There are over 80,000 chemicals used in building materials, home goods, and other consumer products. Many widely used chemicals are found in our bodies, are harmful to our health, and persist in our environment. For over a decade, the team has researched indoor exposure to chemicals from building materials and guided decisions on healthier materials.

CLIMATE

Buildings consume over 40% of the world's energy. Increasing the energy efficiency of buildings can lead to environmental and health co-benefits. In this context, the team has developed the Co-Benefits of the Built Environment (CoBE) tool, allowing building owners, operators, investors, and others to quantify health and climate benefits for evidence-based decision-making.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the importance of indoor air quality and proved that buildings should be the first line of defense to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. As chair of the Lancet COVID-19 Commission's Task Force on Safe Work, Safe School, and Safe Travel, and advisor to national and state leaders, Dr. Joseph Allen emphasizes the foundational role that buildings must play in disease control.

Discover the Harvard Healthy Buildings Program's research and learn more about the most recent studies, reports, and tools at **forhealth.org**