

## It's the mix that counts



**Adults spend about 80 to 90 percent of their time indoors. Even more when you add the increased use of the home office these days. This makes it all the more important to design the living environment in such a way that it does not affect the health of the residents. There are many factors that contribute to a healthy home.**

A well-known phenomenon from advertising: Sweets are advertised as if they consist almost exclusively of vitamins. In this way, consumers get the impression that the consumption of these sweets is „good for their health“. As a matter of fact, however, the high consumption of sugar causes serious health problems.

This shows that the term „health“ is used quite freely. The situation is similar for buzzwords like „healthy living“ or „healthy home“, which are finding increasingly widespread use. In order to provide health-conscious house-builders and renovators with more security and useful guidance, a clear definition of the term is desirable. „Healthy for living is everything that has a positive influence on a person's well-being and health. It is therefore important to avoid not only pollutants and emissions, but also too little light and too much noise, because these can also make people ill,“ explains Hartmut Urbath, Chairman of the Technical Council of the GEV, the Association for the Control of Emissions in Products for Flooring Installation, Adhesives and Building Materials. The GEV's Technical Council awards the EMICODE® ecolabel to building materials that have been tested and guarantee the lowest possible level of VOC emissions.

Whether adhesives, window sealing tapes or insulation boards – before use, all building materials must have been tested for harmful emissions such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Only products that feature very low emission values are awarded the generally recognized EMICODE® quality seal. EMICODE®-certified products thus make an important contribution to the health of your home.

But there is more to a healthy living environment. Due to the high insulation standard today – whether in new-builds or existing buildings with retrofitted insulation – there is hardly any air exchange through joints and cracks. The consequences for the room air are a higher CO<sub>2</sub> content and excessive humidity. In order to avoid fatigue, headaches and ultimately mold growth, adequate ventilation is therefore absolutely essential. This can be done manually by opening the windows and cross-ventilating the rooms several times a day. Or by installing a controlled ventilation system that ensures the automatic exchange of air. Such a system extracts the stale air from inside the rooms and leads it outside. By recovering the residual heat in the exhaust air, the fresh air drawn in from outside is preheated, thus increasing

the energy efficiency of the building. The fresh air is filtered through fine dust and pollen filters before releasing it to the inside – a blessing especially for allergy sufferers. For existing buildings, there are also decentralized ventilation units to avoid the subsequent installation of a piping system.

Tap water in Germany is tested regularly and has a consistently high quality that is suitable for use as food. Provided the installation complies with the strict legal standards. Do-it-yourself drinking water fixtures are therefore not recommended. Fittings and pipes, whether made of plastic, copper or stainless steel, must not release dangerous amounts of harmful particles into the drinking water. For this reason, the installation work is best left to a professional plumber.

An adequate supply of daylight has a positive effect on our psyche and physical well-being. Lack of natural light leads to tiredness and concentration deficits. Especially people who work in a home office should make sure that they do not sit in a dark corner but are supplied with plenty of daylight through sufficiently large windows or skylights.

Noise can seriously harm human health. Both the noise coming from outside and the noise generated inside the home can make you ill. Solidly built houses provide protection against noise generated by traffic, industry or other noise sources, supported if necessary by the installation of soundproof windows. Inside the apartment or house, a very open floor plan should be avoided because open spaces promote the generation of sound. Firmly bonded floor coverings such as parquet also provide better protection against footfall sound than floor coverings where floating installation was used. Care should be taken to ensure that only adhesives with the EMICODE® label are used.

An often underestimated danger is the noble gas radon, which in some areas of Germany emanates from the soil or rock in high concentrations. The odorless gas is suspected of causing cancer. To protect residents from radon exposure, the floor slab or the basement must be sealed so that it is radonproof.

The room temperature contributes significantly to our sense of well-being. In view of the high energy prices, many homeowners and tenants have lately reduced the heating temperature. However, this should not go so far as to make you feel uncomfortable in your own four walls. If the room temperature is too low, there is also a risk that mold will grow over time because the humidity in the air condenses on cold surfaces like exterior walls. Another underestimated danger is the overheating of living spaces in summer. Thermal insulation of the exterior walls or roof, as well as automatically controlled shading devices, can make a big difference here. If need be, also air-conditioning units can help.

As with nutrition, the same applies to healthy living: It's the mix that counts. If you ensure good indoor air, sufficient daylight, clean water and choose the right products for your home – for example by looking out for the EMICODE® label – you have already done a lot for your health.

Further information on the GEV's activities, the EMICODE® emission classes and test methods can be found on [www.emicode.com](http://www.emicode.com)

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Only products complying with the most stringent emission limits are awarded the EMICODE® label. Manufacturers must undertake to produce these products according to high quality standards and subject to strict monitoring to fulfil the EMICODE® requirements at all times. To ensure maximum reliability of the emission values claimed by the manufacturers, the products are regularly submitted to random spot checks by independent, internationally recognized testing institutes. The EMICODE® label is currently used in up to 20 languages. The GEV (Gemeinschaft emissionskontrollierte Verlegewerkstoffe, Klebstoffe und Bauprodukte e.V.) in Düsseldorf has been responsible for EMICODE® since 1997. **Contact:** [info@emicode.com](mailto:info@emicode.com)