



IAQ RADIO+

Show Number: 751 BLOG

Kenneth Mendez, CEO & President Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

Good day and welcome to IAQ Radio+ episode 751 blog. This week we welcomed Kenneth Mendez the CEO and President of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. AAFA has been doing interesting work-related indoor environments in particular their asthma and allergy friendly certification program.

Kenneth Mendez became CEO and President of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) in 2018. Mendez's career has bridged the corporate and non-profit sectors. Since joining AAFA, he has led the organization in establishing a new multi-year strategic plan that emphasizes dramatically reducing the impact of asthma and allergies on the underserved and tripling the size of AAFA's online asthma community. The new strategic plan's vision is for AAFA to be recognized as the most trusted ally serving the asthma and allergy community.

He is quoted in outlets such as the New York Times, Washington Post and NBC Nightly News, among others. Mendez has an MBA in marketing from Columbia Business School and a B.A. in American History and American Art from Harvard College. Mendez also has a personal stake in AAFA's mission as he and two of his children manage asthma and allergies.

NUGGETS MINED FROM TODAY'S EPISODE:

What is AAFA? The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) works to support individuals with asthma and allergies through various initiatives, including collaborating with regional groups, advocating for disability accommodations, and providing an online community for support. Founded in 1953, AAFA is the oldest and largest organization of its type dealing with asthma; AAFA's **Asthma & Allergy Friendly**® Certification Program is 20 years old. Tests and certifies products to help reduce allergens in indoor environments, offering guidance on managing indoor air quality and allergen exposure. The organization is also involved in research, policy advocacy, and developing new standards to improve the lives of those affected by asthma and allergies. AAFA operates an online Safe Space for the asthma community.

Certification Program? Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program is a partnership between AAFA and Allergy Standards Ltd which provides product recommendations and advice on managing indoor allergens. He explains that the program tests and certifies products like air cleaners, vacuum cleaners, bedding, and laundry detergents to ensure they meet standards for reducing allergens. Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certified products do not make medical claims.

Ken recommends keeping indoor humidity below 50%, placing air cleaners near where people spend the most time, and washing bedding at high temperatures to kill dust mites. He also mentions the importance of proper ventilation, using HEPA filters, and controlling moisture to prevent mold growth.

- 100 million people in the US are afflicted with allergies and asthma.
- The economic impact of asthma on the US is \$82 billion annually.
- 10 people in the US die daily as the result of asthma.

Got allergies?

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people with disabilities from discrimination. (A 504 plan can be used in school settings to accommodate children with these conditions.)
- When you have allergy symptoms see a specialist who can test to determine what allergens are triggering your reactions.
- Allergens are commonly found in house dust.
- Pollen is at highest late morning.
- Avoid bringing outdoors allergens inside.
- Don't sleep with pets in bedroom or pets in bed.
- Remove carpeting.
- Dust mites can be removed from bedding by laundering at 130°F.
- Create a barrier to allergen by using dust mite resistant mattress covers.
- Upgrade your furnace filter.
- Use portable air cleaners.
- Use HEPA vacuums.

Allergies are increasing due to climate change resulting in longer growing seasons. AAFA advocates Global Policies to Combat Climate Change.

<https://aafa.org/advocacy/key-issues/climate-and-health/clean-air/>

The 2025 Allergy Capitals report listing the most challenging US cities to live with

allergies is coming out soon. The ranking is based on 3 criteria: • Tree, grass, and weed pollen scores • Over-the-counter allergy medicine use • Availability of board-certified allergists/immunologists. Allentown, PA has previously ranked #1. Allergycapitals.org

What is anaphylaxis? Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction that occurs rapidly after exposure to an allergen. Symptoms can include difficulty breathing, swelling, hives, and a drop in blood pressure, requiring immediate medical attention and treatment with epinephrine. For asthma the treatment is most commonly albuterol in the form an inhaled mist.

- Tarkett's Powerbond Cushion RS is the world's first soft-surface flooring CERTIFIED asthma & allergy friendly®; proven to reduce exposure to asthma and allergy triggers.

The human element. Improving IEQ is dependent on the human element; improved air filters, HEPA vacuums, etc. won't work unless they deployed and used.

RoundUp

Ken Mendez

- I'm Preaching to the choir.
- Many people are unaware of the 10 asthma deaths daily.
- If you have allergies, know your triggers.
- See your doctor.
- Visit the AAFA website. Aafa.org

Radio Joe

- Suggests that Kenneth explore potential collaboration with ROCIS (Reducing Outdoor Contaminants in Indoor Spaces) group. <https://rocis.org/program>
- Reiterates Children's Mercy Hospitals' IAQ recommendation to vacuum your floors once a week for each person and pet in the home.

Z-Man-

<https://www.iaqradio.com/blogs/749.pdf>

"Air Purifiers vs Surface Cleaning

Dr. Delphine Farmer, PhD (Colorado State University) discussed the effectiveness of

air purifiers and surface cleaning in reducing wildfire smoke exposure. She explained that air purifiers are ineffective for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and only address the air, not the persistent source of smoke inside a home. Air cleaners with filters treated with activated carbon were not significantly effective in reducing VOC levels. Surface cleaning, on the other hand, was found to be highly effective in removing the source of smoke. Delphine recommended thorough cleaning of all surfaces, including hidden ones, and washing fabrics to remove the smoke source. She also emphasized the importance of wearing an N95 mask while cleaning to reduce exposure to particulate matter.” <https://www.iaqradio.com/blogs/749.pdf>

Z-man signing off