



TIPS FOR CREATING AN ALLERGY-FREE HOME

There are things in our homes that cause allergies and asthma symptoms that should be removed. Is it possible to completely remove every single allergy-causing source within our homes? Not really. Biological air pollutants can be found, to some degree, in every home, school and workplace. It may be hard to believe, but even the space shuttle has problems with contaminants: cat allergen! It is important, though, to take the necessary steps to reduce allergen levels in the home.

So, what is in our homes that can be so unhealthy?

Indoor air is contaminated with allergens and irritants. Here are some examples of indoor air pollution sources, along with ideas on how to avoid them or diminish their effects:

- Cigarette Smoke: declare your home a smoke-free zone.
- Candles, perfumes, colognes and air fresheners: make your home scent-free.
- Gas fumes from gas appliances: use electric appliances where possible; otherwise, keep all gas appliance properly serviced.
- Contaminants from wood burning fireplaces, stoves and oil lamps: they create soot that can be inhaled and should be avoided.
- Furnishings made of pressed or laminated woods: use hardwood furniture instead.
- Solvents, paints, lacquers and stains fumes: avoid storing these items in your home.

Common Allergen Sources

House Dust

House dust is made of many things, including dirt, insect debris, dust mites, animal proteins, human skin fragments, food crumbs, bacteria, fungi, and other materials. House dust collects on every item in the home, including mattresses, upholstered furniture, clothes, rugs, drapes, and stuffed animals. House dust can be a major cause of year-round runny or stuffy nose, itchy, watery eyes and sneezing for allergy sufferers. Dust can also make people with asthma experience wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.



It is very difficult to avoid house dust, but the following recommendations will help to decrease the built-up levels of allergens in your home:

- Keep your home very clean and dry.
- Damp wipe or mop all smooth surfaces on a weekly basis
- Increase ventilation – heat exchangers will increase ventilation
- Decrease humidity use a dehumidifier in hot humid months to keep relative humidity below 50%
- Remove carpeting
- Install under floor heating (radiant heating)
- Measure relative humidity and keep in less than 50%
- Don't store clothing, cardboard paper items in the basement as they attract moisture
- Use the clothes dryer to dry clothing, do not hang wet clothes to dry in the basement
- Use the kitchen fan, vented to the outside to remove moisture and cooking odors
- Use the bathroom fan when showering or bathing and run it for a minimum of 15 minutes
- If there is a crawl space with a dirt floor, use 6-mil polyethylene to cover the entire floor
- Change your clothes when you come home from school or work
- Look for feather pillows that come with very tightly woven encasements; this makes it make it difficult for dust mites to penetrate
- Encase your mattress, box spring and pillows in heavy cotton weave, mite proof covers that zipper closed is still a good idea. Remember to tape over the zipper.
- Change linens weekly. Pre-soak or use a longer wash cycle with plenty of soap and don't overcrowd the washer. Ensure the load is adequately rinsed.

For More Information:

Contact the Asthma Society of Canada at 1-866-787-4050 or visit www.Asthma.ca.