



Gifts for someone with Asthma

The winter season usually means holidays and gift giving. Gifts selected for persons with asthma should be given careful consideration. Asthma symptoms may be triggered by a wide array of items such as, dander from pets, dust mites from fabrics, pollen or mould from trees, smoke from burning tobacco and fire-places and possibly scents from perfumes.

Items that commonly cause problems for individuals with asthma include burning candles, potpourri or other room fresheners, fragranced drawer lining paper, perfume, cologne, powders or any other scented personal care products. Add to this list furred or feathered pets, down-filled items, stuffed toys, some foods and plants. Many of the festive seasonal plants such as the poinsettia, mistletoe and holly often contain moulds and collect dust, both of which are asthma triggers.

Selecting an appropriate gift for someone who has asthma need not be challenging. Here are a few ideas.

Books:

There are many books now available on how to create an ‘asthma friendly’ home and garden. Here are two.

- How to Create a Healthy, Allergy-Free Home and Lifestyle - ISBN: 1840002336) Publisher: Miller/Mitchell Beazley
- Allergy-Free Gardening: The Revolutionary Guide to Healthy Landscaping, T Ogren, ISBN: 1580082009 Publisher: Ten Speed Press

Products for indoor air:

- A good quality vacuum cleaner that contains a true HEPA filter.
- Controlling the humidity level in the home means knowing what the current level is. A hygrometer can be useful in determining whether there is too much humidity in the air.
- A great stocking stuffer is ‘No Smoking’ signs for the house entranceway and car.
- Solar powered rechargeable candles that are soot free can provide a romantic soft glow.



- A plant ‘watering’ meter would help reduce the chance of over watering plants that often leads to mould growth.
- A weekly maid service would help reduce the amount of allergens in the home.
- A carbon monoxide detector placed near fireplaces, space heaters and garages, is a great gift and could save lives.

Linens:

- Quilts: It is a myth that feather bedding promotes allergic development. On the contrary, there is evidence that using a synthetic quilt is not as good as using a feather quilt in childhood. So feel free to purchase a good feather pillow or a duvet even if you have asthma. If you have a dust mite allergen, see the next paragraph.
- Dust mite covers: Dust mite protective encasing covers for pillows, mattresses and box springs are also an excellent gift for those who are allergic to dust mites.
- Cotton Bedding: Many individuals with asthma also have other conditions such as eczema, a skin condition that is made worse when in contact with some fabrics. Wool can be irritating to skin, and is not as ‘asthma friendly’ as cotton, as allergens cling to wool and are not easily washed out. Cotton clothing and bedding is always a good choice for people with eczema.
- Stuffed toys: Some toys have been certified ‘Asthma Friendly’. Visit the website: www.asthmafriendly.com to find out where you can purchase these toys.

Jewelry:

- Medic Alert bracelet: Available from www.medicalert.ca , or an Allergy Bracelet from www.foodallergy.org

Donation:

- Consider making a donation to the Asthma Society of Canada.