



Winter Holiday Season Tips

We spend 90% of our time indoors in the winter, which increases our exposure to irritants such as dust mites, pet dander, smoke, household cleaning products and gas fumes — any and all of which can be detrimental. Seasonal decorating can bring new sources of irritants into the home as well.

Creating a festive holiday mood:

Christmas trees, ornaments and decorations, along with logs for wood burning stoves, often have significant levels of dust mites and moulds. Decorations should be stored in sealed containers.

Potpourri and scented candles may also trigger allergy or asthma symptoms; an alternative to consider is simmering cinnamon sticks and whole cloves in water. Scented candles also tend to produce more black soot than non-scented candles.

Entertaining:

When cleaning your house in preparation for guests, use mild, non-toxic cleaners. Avoid air fresheners and furniture polish. Most cleaning can be accomplished with a few non-toxic items from your kitchen pantry such as baking soda or vinegar. Use phosphate-free detergents.

Do not allow smoking in your home at anytime.

When cooking or baking, use the kitchen fans to remove fumes and moisture

Fireplaces and wood burning stoves:

These units are a source of particulate matter that is not good for your lungs unless the wood burning stove is perfectly sealed.

As you cozy up to the fireplace this winter, remember that particles and gases from fires can make breathing difficult, especially for asthmatics so try to avoid using them. Dry wood burns hotter and cleaner than "green" wood and hardwoods are better than coniferous trees (i.e. evergreens).

Do not store wood inside.

Candles:

Avoid scented candles. Burning candles give off soot which can be a source of irritation. Purchase unscented candles.

Buy soy or beeswax candles.

Alternatively, consider not lighting the candles and using them for decoration only.



Artificial Christmas trees and wreaths:

Depending on how they were stored, artificial trees and wreaths can be a source of dust and moulds. Damp wipe your tree and wreaths prior to use.

Real Christmas trees and seasonal plants:

Most trees are cut in October and stored, so they have a mould from the rain and slush. Spray it down with a garden hose and place the bottom of the tree in a bucket of water. Let it dry.

Festive plants such as poinsettia, holly, and mistletoe may contain moulds and dust – two major culprits in triggering symptoms

When handling a real tree, wear gloves and a long sleeved shirt to keep sap away from the skin.

Damp wipe all tree ornaments before decorating the tree.

Damp wipe lights before decorating the tree. * **Caution. Lights should be wiped prior to being plugged in, even if switched off.**

Shopping:

If you find shopping stressful consider using the Internet, mail, or phone options.

Food:

Food is an essential part of the holiday celebrations - nuts, dried fruits, and eggnog. If you have food allergies, be sure to ask about ingredients before you eat. When in doubt, don't eat it. If you are sensitive to sulphites, watch out for them in beer, wine, champagne, dried fruits, grapes, and pickle relishes.