

Ahhhh Chooo! ZAP ALLERGENS!

Spring cleaning help for allergy and asthma sufferers. Spring cleaning makes our home look great! It also creates a healthier environment – particularly if anyone in the household suffers from allergies or asthma, says The Soap and Detergent Association. Help for allergy and asthma sufferers is here!

What are Allergens?

The common allergens in our homes (animal dander, cockroaches, dust/dust mites, mold/mildew, and pollen) are a serious problem for people with allergies and asthma. Allergens are often airborne and may be widespread, making them difficult to avoid. They collect in bedding, furniture, carpeting, and wherever there's warmth and moisture. If they're not removed, they'll accumulate, causing an even greater threat.

Cleaning Removes Allergens!

When done properly, cleaning removes or reduces common allergens. When done regularly, cleaning stops allergens from accumulating, which helps minimize allergy and/or asthma symptoms.

While cleaning is important, simple acts of cleaning, vacuuming, and dusting stir up the air and increase the level of allergens in the immediate vicinity. And, just as with other airborne particles, cleaning products can trigger a response in some allergic or asthmatic people. However, particles from cleaning products remain in the air for only a short time, whereas allergens will continue to accumulate if they aren't removed.

How to Minimize Reactions.

- **Be label wise.** Read and follow product label directions. They tell you the proper amount of product to use, how to safely use the product, and special precautions you should take.
- **Explore your options.** If fragrances are a concern, look for cleaning products without scents.
- **Air it out.** Open a window or turn on a fan so you're cleaning in a well-ventilated area. When done, leave the area until everything settles down.
- **Spray smart.** Don't spray cleaner directly on surfaces. Instead, spray onto a cloth first; then clean. This traps particles, rather than dispersing them in the air.
- **Divide and conquer.** Divide housecleaning into small tasks spread out over several days. This can minimize exposure to airborne allergens and cleaning products.

Allergy-Proof Your Environment

Medicines help treat allergy symptoms once they strike, but there are several steps you can take to prevent symptoms altogether. The following recommendations can help you avoid allergy triggers whether you're at home, outdoors, or out on the town.

At Home

- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning if you're allergic to pollen. Don't use fans since they can stir up dust.
- Filter the air. Cover air conditioning vents with cheesecloth to filter pollen and use a high efficiency particulate air filter (HEPA) if you have a forced air furnace. Clean air filters frequently and air ducts at least once a year.
- Keep the humidity in your house below 50% to prevent mold growth.
- If you have pets, consider keeping them outside or perhaps ask someone else to take care of them. Animal dander and saliva are common allergens for many people. If you must keep your pets indoors, do not allow them in the bedroom and be sure to bathe them often.
- Avoid areas where molds may collect, including basements, garages, crawl spaces, barns, and compost heaps. Have someone else clean these areas often.
- Install dehumidifiers or steam vaporizers in basements and other areas of the house where molds tend to collect. Clean these devices every week.
- Air out damp clothes and shoes (in the house) before storing.
- Remove laundry from the washing machine promptly. Don't leave wet clothes in the washer where mold can quickly grow.
- Wash shower curtains and bathroom tiles with mold-killing solutions.
- Don't collect too many indoor plants as soil encourages mold growth.
- Store firewood outside.
- Use plastic covers for pillows, mattresses, and box springs. Avoid overstuffed furniture and down-filled bedding or pillows.
- Wash your bedding every week in hot water.
- Don't allow smoking in your house.

- Wear a mask and gloves when cleaning, vacuuming, or painting to limit dust and chemical exposure.
- Vacuum twice a week.
- Limit throw rugs to reduce dust and mold. If you do have rugs, make sure they are washable.
- When possible, choose hardwood floors instead of carpeting. If you must have carpeting, choose low-pile material.
- Avoid dust-collecting Venetian blinds or long drapes. Replace old drapes with window shades instead.
- Make sure there is an exhaust fan over the stove to remove cooking fumes.