



HEALTH & HOME

Fighting Indoor Allergens

(NAPSA)—When it comes to keeping the house clean, what you see is not always what you get. Doctors say even homes that look perfectly clean could still house indoor allergens like mold and dust—all of which can lead to nasal congestion, sneezing, flu-like symptoms and other uncomfortable allergy and even asthma symptoms.

How prevalent are indoor allergens? It's been reported that indoor air may be two to five times more polluted than outdoor air—and a study by the University of Arizona found 100 percent of homes tested had indoor mold. So what's the best way to fight indoor allergens? The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America offers these tips to handle the most common indoor allergens:

Dust Mites

Dust mites are microscopic creatures found throughout the house. To reduce dust mites, try to keep the humidity in your home below 50 percent. Also, vacuum rugs weekly or, if possible, remove rugs in favor of hardwood. It's also a good idea to encase mattresses and pillows in airtight, allergen-proof covers.

Mold

Molds are microscopic fungi that need only a source of moisture and food to grow. According to "The Mold Doctor," Dr. Jay Portnoy, chief, Section of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, Children's Mercy Hospitals & Clinics, Kansas City, Missouri, "The most important step for managing mold growth is to cut off the source of moisture. But if you do have mold growth, make sure to take care of it immediately. Soft surfaces like carpet should be disposed of, and for hard nonporous surfaces, the best way to both remove the mold and eliminate the allergenic properties is by cleaning regularly with an EPA-registered



Controlling household mold can help your family breathe easier.

solution containing low concentrations of bleach, like Tilex® Mold and Mildew Remover, which has been proven to not only remove but to kill 99.9 percent of common household mold." People with allergies or asthma should ask nonsufferers to apply all cleaning products. Also, it's important to read and follow precautions and use instructions on cleaners.

Pet Dander

Pet dander is protein from an animal's skin or saliva that is carried on small airborne particles. Studies have shown that bathing a cat or dog on a weekly basis can reduce the amount of dander in the air. It may also help to clean your home using a vacuum that has a HEPA vacuum filter or double bag. Simply sweeping could actually make the problem worse because it may stir up pet hair.

Household Hints

Try these general tips for reducing indoor allergens.

- Maintain indoor relative humidity at 35 to 50 percent.
- Fix leaking pipes immediately and prevent water from intruding into the house.
- Use exhaust fans to increase bathroom and kitchen ventilation.
- Use air-conditioning during the summer months at times of high humidity.