

Spring Cleaning: Sweeping Up Indoor Allergens

Spring is just around the corner and so is spring cleaning. For the more than 40 million people throughout the country who suffer from indoor allergies, this is an especially important step to take in managing symptoms.

Steps to Reducing Indoor Allergens

Spring cleaning should focus on sites where allergens accumulate. These allergens include: tobacco smoke, aerosols, paint, perfumes, cleaning products or other strong odors or fumes. Increased time spent indoors during the winter months also means increased exposure to dust, pet dander, mold and other allergens that can trigger an allergic reaction. Use the following checklist to guide your spring cleaning:

- Get rid of clutter that may be collecting dust
- Clean windows, book shelves and air conditioning vents thoroughly as they may have collected dust and mold throughout the winter
- Put mattresses, box springs, and pillows in allergy-proof or “non-allergenic” cases
- Vacuum carpeting, or replace it with washable throw rugs
- Wash blankets, sheets, and pillowcases in 130-degree water and dry in a hot dryer
- Fix leaks – they leave surfaces wet and allow mold to grow
- Clean moldy surfaces, such as the corners of showers or under sinks
- Clean under stoves, refrigerators, or toasters where loose crumbs can accumulate and attract cockroaches
- Block cellar doors, outside drains, and wall, window, or floor cracks where cockroaches could enter your home

Symptoms of Indoor Allergies

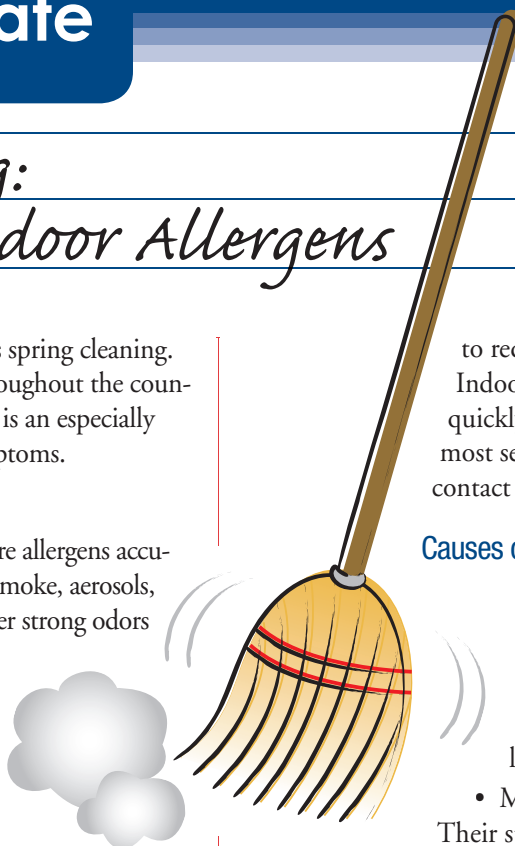
If you see an increase in sneezing, coughing, red eyes or other allergy symptoms, it is important to take steps

to reduce allergens in your home. Indoor allergy symptoms can occur quickly, or they may build and become most severe eight to twelve hours after contact with an allergen.

Causes of Indoor Allergies

- Dust Mites thrive in house dust, which is composed of plant and animal material. Their droppings are the most common trigger of perennial allergy and asthma symptoms.
- Molds are microscopic fungi. Their spores float in the air like pollen, and are present throughout the year in many states. Molds can be found indoors in attics, basements, bathrooms, refrigerators and other food storage areas, garbage containers, carpets and upholstery.
- People are not allergic to their pets’ hair, but to a protein found in the saliva, dander (dead skin flakes) or urine of an animal with fur. These proteins are carried in the air on small, invisible particles and can trigger allergy symptoms.
- Cockroaches live in warm, tropical climates, but various species dwell in the offices and homes of humans living in various climates. A protein found in their droppings can trigger allergy and asthma symptoms.

Please contact an allergist/immunologist for information on treatment options and tips on reducing allergen exposure. It is important to learn what causes your indoor allergies so that you can take steps to make them easier to live with. An allergist/immunologist is the best qualified medical professional to manage the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of allergies and asthma.



For a checklist of routine cleaning that will help prevent indoor allergy symptoms, please visit the Patients & Consumers Center of the AAAAI Web site, www.aaaai.org.

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