

Spring cleaning can alleviate allergies

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Allergies affect people of all ages. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology reports that allergic rhinitis affects between 10 and 30 percent of the world's population. In addition, the prevalence of allergic diseases has risen in industrialized nations for more than 50 years.

Seasonal allergies tend to be the strongest in spring and autumn. Allergies can be exacerbated by many factors, including in homes where improvements are being made. Regular housecleaning can remove many common allergy triggers and help alleviate symptoms. Knowing which

common home improvement mistakes can aggravate allergies can help homeowners avoid them.

Suit up

Before any cleaning begins, allergy sufferers should don face masks and rubber gloves to prevent themselves from breathing in allergens or having them touch their hands, where they can be transferred to the face or elsewhere. Those cleaning should also wear clothes that can be easily removed and laundered after a day's work.

Clean windows singularly

Prolonged exposure to outdoor allergens, such as pollen, mold or ragweed, can aggra-



Leave carpet and upholstery shampooing to the professionals, as excess moisture can contribute to mold and dust mites, which aggravate allergy symptoms.

vate allergies. Therefore, if windows are being cleaned, do one at a time and then promptly close the window. Having the air conditioning running can help filter the air as well.

Use exhaust fans

The AAAAI recommends using an exhaust fan in the kitchen and bathrooms to reduce the levels of moisture in these rooms and filter out potential allergens and odors. Moisture can eventually lead to the growth of mold and mildew, which isn't healthy for anyone, including allergy sufferers, to breathe in.

Invest in a HEPA filter

Vacuums with HEPA filters can trap allergens that are so small that they pass through regular vacuum filters. That means instead of containing them, these small particles are only being shot back into the air where they are easily breathed in. WebMD suggests vacuuming once or twice a week to keep carpets and floors as clean as

possible. Plus, don't forget to vacuum upholstered furniture and drapes as well.

Launder with hot water

When it comes time to wash linens, do so in hot water, which can kill dust mites residing in sheets and blankets. Employ mattress covers to further protect against dust mite allergies.

Shampoo smart

Shampooing a carpet may

cause moisture to become trapped in the carpet fibers, leading to increased dust mites or mold growth. Spot-clean stains instead. Otherwise, hire a professional cleaner who will clean and dry the carpet as quickly as possible.

Damp dusting is better

When cleaning up dust or home renovation debris, use a damp cloth or a vinegar solution to wipe down surfaces. This helps trap small particles instead of sending them into the air.

Treat mold issues

Mold can trigger allergic reactions, so it is best to keep it out of a home. Solutions that contain at least 10 percent bleach can be effective at killing mold, but it's best to prevent mold from growing entirely. That means keeping tabs of any moisture issues and addressing them immediately.

Allergies can be problematic, but routine home cleaning in the right way can help alleviate symptoms.

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How to control common spring pests



Ants are a nuisance that become more active as the weather warms.

Just when winter thaws out and people are anxious to enjoy the blooming flowers and luscious lawns of spring, pesky pests can appear and impact comfort levels and safety.

Many pests resume their levels of activity as spring draws closer and tempera-

tures warm up. The presence of these insects and rodents may cause problems in and around a home, which makes it essential to recognize them and avoid issues. The following are some of the more common spring pests and how to remedy infestations.

Pavement ants

Pavement ants are some of the most common pests residents encounter inside and outside of their homes. These ants are light brown to black with appendages that are lighter than the rest of their bodies. Small in stature, pavement ants have parallel lines on their heads and thorax, according to pest extermination company Orkin.

Although pavement ants nest outdoors, they can enter homes through small crevices in search of food scraps. Their large colonies may not disappear until treatment is introduced. Keep foods in tightly sealed containers, clear counters and floors of crumbs, and address water sources, such as leaks. Pesticides may be needed in extreme conditions.

Fleas

Fleas are tiny, jumping, biting pests that must find a host upon which to live. As ectoparasites, they feed on blood while living on the body of living hosts. Pets can bring fleas inside the yard and home in warm weather. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, flea larvae develop more quickly at higher temperatures. At normal room temperatures, the entire life cycle of a flea is about 18 days.

Several flea control prod-

ucts are available to control fleas on cats and dogs. There also may be powders and sprays to alleviate flea infestations in the home. Vacuuming is also very effective in killing larvae in the carpet and at picking up adults.

Wasps

An errant wasp, hornet or yellow jacket may have survived winter and ridden out the colder temperatures within a home. Once the weather warms, queens will begin to look for places to lay eggs and establish colonies. Treating areas where wasps are seen entering and leaving the home is key. Seal holes as soon as possible.

Although wasps help control other insect populations, their painful stings and potentially aggressive nature can make them challenging to have around a home. If a nest is found, hire a professional to remove it.

Spiders

Many spiders are not harmful enough to humans and pets to be much of a problem. In fact, spiders can be helpful to have around to control the populations of other insects. Still, many homeowners would prefer these web-slinging friends remain outdoors. Therefore, sealing cracks in a home's foundation and repairing small openings around windows and doors can help keep spiders out. Also, alleviating moisture issues in basements, garages or attics may keep out other bugs that would be prey to spiders.

Homeowners can take the steps necessary to cut down on pests in and around their homes.

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