

It's that time: Spring cleaning can alleviate allergies

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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 aggravate 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.

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.

Laundry 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.

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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.

Less common allergy symptoms

Allergy symptoms are a result of a person's immune system overreacting to something that is harmless to most people but sparks a reaction in people sensitive to the trigger. Some symptoms of allergic reactions, such as sneezing, are widely known. But people may be surprised to discover some of the other common allergy symptoms.

According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, a host of physical symptoms are indicative of allergic reactions.

- Wheezing, shortness of breath: The ACAAI says that wheezing or shortness of breath are telltale signs of asthma, but notes that such symptoms also may be indicative of an allergic reaction.
- Cough: The appear-

ance of a dry, persistent cough may indicate an allergy. Coughs are often a byproduct of a cold or flu, but such coughs tend to taper off after a few days. Chronic dry coughs that linger for more than three weeks may indicate the presence of an allergy. Allergy-related coughs may be more prevalent during certain times of year or in certain environments.

The ACAAI notes that chronic dry cough has been linked to allergies such as hay fever and may indicate an allergy to pet dander, dust, pollen, or mold.

• Headache: Though few people associate headaches with allergies, some headaches can be allergy-related. According to the ACAAI, sinus headaches and migraines have been linked to allergies.

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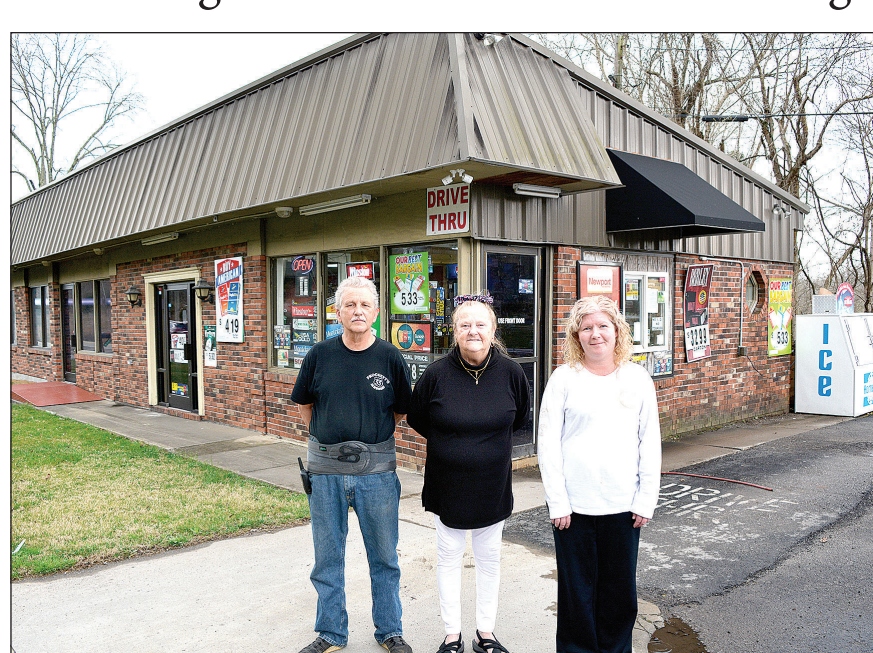
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