



## 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, or out of 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 high efficiency particulate air filters, change 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 bed and make sure to bathe them often.
- Avoid areas where molds may collect, including basements, garages, crawl spaces, barns and compost heaps. Let someone else clean these areas often.
- Install dehumidifiers in basements and other areas of the house where molds tend to collect. Clean these devices once a 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.
- 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.

## **In the Car**

- Keep windows closed and set the air conditioner to use recirculated air if you are allergic to pollen.
- Don't permit smoking in the car.

## **Outdoors**

- Minimize walks in wooded areas or gardens.
- Check the forecast. Stay indoors as much as possible on hot, dry, windy days when pollen counts are generally higher.
- Try to avoid extreme temperature changes—they are triggers for some people with asthma.
- If possible, stay indoors between 5 and 10 a.m. when outdoor pollen counts are usually highest.
- Wear a mask (such as an inexpensive painter's mask) when mowing the lawn if you are allergic to grass pollen. Avoid mowing and being around freshly cut grass if possible.
- Wear a mask when gardening, as flowers and some weeds release pollen and can cause allergy symptoms.
- Avoid raking leaves or working with hay or mulch if you are allergic to mold.
- After being outdoors, take a shower, wash your hair, and change your clothes to remove pollen that may have collected on your clothes and hair.
- To protect yourself from insect stings, wear shoes, long pants and sleeves, and do not wear scented deodorant, perfumes, or shampoos or hair products.
- Don't hang clothes or linens out to dry, as pollen and molds may collect in them and can make your allergies worse.