

# HELP YOURSELF TO A HEALTHY HOME

More than eight million children in the United States have a disease called *asthma*. Asthma is a leading reason that children miss school or end up in the hospital. Asthma makes it hard for people to breathe. Some people even die from asthma. This disease has no cure yet, but it can be controlled.

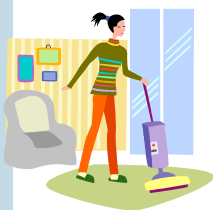
Another 40 to 50 million people have allergies. Allergies can also make it hard for people to breath by causing asthma attacks. An allergy is an unusual reaction to something, like a food or a plant. Common signs of allergies are a stuffy or runny nose, itching, or a rash. This section will help you ask the right questions to find out how to make your home a safer, healthier place.

What can you do around your home to make it a healthier place for people with allergies or asthma?

### Pay attention to your asthma and allergies

Know what triggers your or your children's asthma or allergies. Talk to a doctor about keeping emergency medicine around if your asthma or allergies are severe.

### Healthy housekeeping



*Clean your home often.* Since cleaning puts dust in the air, have someone without asthma or allergies do it. Wear a dust mask if you cannot find someone to do it.

*Keep clutter down.* Clutter collects dust. Store belongings in plastic or cardboard boxes instead of keeping them in piles and stacks. You can move the boxes to make cleaning easier.

*When possible, avoid rugs and carpeting.* Hard floors (vinyl, wood or tile) are easier to keep dust free. If you do have carpeting, vacuum frequently. You may be able to buy or borrow a vacuum with a special HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Air) filter to get rid of dust. Call your local or state health department for more information.

### Keep down dust mites

Dust mites are tiny insects that live in carpets, upholstered furniture and bedding. Use zippered plastic mattress covers between sheets and pillowcases. A mattress cover may make it feel more comfortable.

Wash bedding, including blankets, pillow cases, and mattress pads, in *very hot water*.

### Control other pests

Roaches and rodents can trigger asthma and allergies. They need food, water and shelter to survive. You can control roaches, mice and other pests by making these things hard for them to get. Here are some tips to keeps pests away:

- ... store food in tightly sealed containers
- ...clean up bread crumbs and spills promptly
- ...empty garbage often
- ...don't leave out pet food
- ...seal cracks where roaches and other bugs can enter
- ...fix plumbing leaks and drips
- ...wash dirty dishes right after eating

### Pets

Furry pets like dogs, cats and gerbils can cause asthma and allergy attacks. If you have pets, keep them away from the sleeping area and off fabric covered furniture.



### Check your appliances

Make sure your gas appliances, have yearly check-ups to protect from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Check the filter on the furnace and change them several times yearly. The filters traps dust.

### Smoking

Cigarette, pipes and cigar smoke causes health problems, especially to those with asthma and allergies and to children.



**Mold**

When people breathe in mold, it can cause allergies and asthma to act up. Mold needs water to grow. Keep your home dry to control mold. That will also help with roaches and dust mites.

Air cleaners may help in the bedrooms of allergy and asthma patients. Good air cleaners (with HEPA filters) can cost about \$100.00. **DO NOT** use an air cleaner that makes ozone because ozone can cause health problems.

*The information within this fact sheet is available at The National Center for Healthy Housing website @ [www.nchn.org](http://www.nchn.org) and is reproduced from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) pamphlet "Help Yourself to a Healthy Home," originally produced by the University of Wisconsin with grant assistance from HU and the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

**NEIGHBORHOOD LEGAL SERVICES,  
INC.**

237 MAIN STREET  
SUITE 400  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14203-2473

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