



Spring Cleaning Secrets For A Healthy Home

(ARA) - For all the joys spring brings, you can find some not-so-fun harbingers as well - like sneezing, sniffing and itchy, watery eyes. When spring cleaning season arrives, allergy season does, too.

More than half of Americans test positive when exposed to one or more allergens, according to the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. And more than half of all homes in the U.S. have at least six detectable allergens in the air, such as cat and dog dander, dust mites, pollen or mold spores. As the weather warms, more allergens are present in the air. Reducing the amount of allergens in your home can help improve indoor air quality and reduce your exposure to allergy triggers.

But if your spring cleaning routine doesn't specifically focus on allergen removal, and only moves dust around (sending allergens airborne), or incorporates products that can add pollutants to indoor air, it won't do much to help minimize allergens in your home.

If you suffer from allergies and asthma, consult with your doctor on the best course of treatment, and tackle spring cleaning with these simple tips - from the asthma & allergy friendly Certification Program, by the nonprofit

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) - to help control the allergens that can exacerbate allergies and trigger asthma.

Make your home asthma & allergy friendly

Consumers spend nearly \$18 billion annually on asthma and allergy medications. But they also spend more than \$20 billion on non-medical consumer products marketed for people with asthma and allergies, according to AAFA. While demand for such products continues to grow, there is little to no regulation governing their product claims, the Foundation notes. AAFA's asthma & allergy friendly Certification Program helps consumers evaluate and verify the allergen-reducing effectiveness of a variety of products, from cleaning supplies, air cleaning devices and vacuums to toys, bedding, home improvement products, paints, clothes washers and more.

Created in 2005 in collaboration with a leading testing and certification partner, Allergy Standards Limited (ASL), and top medical experts, the program independently tests and certifies products that are more suitable for people living with asthma and allergies. The

products that have successfully passed testing are "certified" and identified by a distinctive certification mark on their packaging. You can learn about the certification process and certified products at www.aaafa.org/certified.

Cleaning tips for maximum effectiveness

- House dust is one of the most common irritants for allergy sufferers. You may think dusting your home will help reduce allergens, but if you use a feather duster that simply lifts the dust off surfaces and into the air, you will actually increase airborne dust particles. Always use moist cloths or special dry cloths designed to trap and lock dust from hard and soft surfaces.

- Certain cleaning products can also contribute to airborne irritants, especially if they contain harsh chemicals, strong odors or volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Choose products that contain none of these irritants, but also beware of "green" labels, as some of these solutions may be made with natural allergenic ingredients, too, such as lemon oils, tea-tree oils or coconut extracts.

- A vacuum that leaks more dust than it captures can make your indoor

air quality worse. Use a vacuum that has a HEPA filter and tight seams and seals to prevent particles from leaking out while you vacuum. Also, choose a style that requires minimal exposure during canister emptying or bag changes.

- Pests become more active during spring and rodent dander and cockroach particles are common household asthma triggers. However, some pesticides may do more harm than good for people with asthma and allergies. If you have a pest problem, look for an exterminator with expertise in integrated pest management and who can advise you on traps and solvents that are safer for people with asthma.

- Cat dander is present in most U.S. homes, even where no cats have lived, studies have shown. Your spring cleaning routine should include freshening linens in your bedroom, where cat or dog dander can settle, becoming food for dust mites. Place mite-proof bedding on your mattresses and pillows. Wash sheets at least once a week in 130-degree water to kill mites and their eggs.

- Mold can grow anywhere in your home where moisture is present, and mold spores are a common asthma and

allergy trigger. To remove mold and mildew look for cleaning products that help kill and prevent mold from returning. Also, keep household humidity below 50 percent and fix leaky pipes and cracks to reduce standing puddles of moisture where mold can prosper.

- Gather stuffed toys, where dust mites, mold and pet dander can accumulate, and wash them in hot water and dry completely before using again. Place stuffed toys that can't be washed in the freezer for 24 hours, then rinse in cold water to remove dead mites, and dry completely. Use your spring cleaning routine to help turn this into a monthly habit.

- Lots of air passes through window areas, and airborne dust and allergens accumulate on all types of window treatments - which are rarely cleaned. In the family room and throughout the home, replace big, heavy linen drapes with more sensible window treatments such as wood blinds or flat screens that are easy to wipe and keep clean.

Spring cleaning season is a great time to adopt new allergy and asthma friendly cleaning habits and products. You can learn more at www.AAFA.org/certified.

Audiologist Attends Convention in Arizona

Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. Clinical Audiologist Jason R. Howe, MS, FAAA, CCC-A recently attended the American Auditory Society Scientific and Technical Meeting in Scottsdale, AZ. This meeting is designed for audiologists, neurologists, neurotologists, otolaryngologists, oto-neurologists, scientists, and students in these respected areas interested in hearing, hearing loss, dizziness, tinnitus, and hearing aids.

Topics included: Improved intelligibility in noise with directional microphones; Benefits and complications of extended-wear hearing aids; Improved sensitivity of diagnosing Ménière's disease using SP/AP area ratios; Implantable technology for the hearing impaired; Critical factors in children with auditory processing disorders; Effects of minimal hearing loss in children in the classroom and in noise; Transtympanic electrically-evoked auditory brainstem response adaptation; Differential diagnoses in children with balance disorders; Cognitive degradation in untreated hearing loss; Reduction in mental fatigue in hearing aid wearers; and Histocompatibility complex in cochlear haircells exposed to interferon-alpha.

Howe offers audiology evaluations and services for pediatric through adult patients. Appointments may be scheduled at Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. by calling (605) 665-1722 or Vermillion Medical Clinic by calling (605) 624-8643.

The Hype About Heart-Healthy Red Wine

Red wine has recently been touted as a cure-all for heart ailments and its popularity has risen as a result. But there remains differing opinions as to the health benefits of red wine.

Red wine is made from fermented red and dark grapes where the skin is left on during the fermenting process. It is this skin that gives the wine its characteristic dark hue. White wine is produced in a similar fashion, although the grape skins are removed before fermentation.

Experts believe that substances in the grapes -- especially in the skins -- contribute to its heart-healthy nature. However, no one is really sure exactly what it is about wine that can make it advantageous to people looking to improve heart health.

Studies supporting red wine's medical benefits suggest antioxidants in red wine called polyphenols help protect the lining of blood vessels in the heart. Polyphenols come in flavonoids and nonflavonoids. Flavonoids are brightly colored plant pigments that occur naturally in most fresh fruits and vegetables. Nonflavonoids are largely vitamins, minerals and other plant pigments. Resveratrol is a nonflavonoid that gets the bulk of the credit when speaking of red wine's medical benefits. Resveratrol is purported to help prevent damage to blood vessels while reducing "bad" cholesterol and may prevent blood clots.

It is important to note that much of the research on resveratrol and red wine has been conducted on mice and other ani-

mals, not people. For humans to acquire the amount of resveratrol given to lab animals to equate to the same health benefits, a person would have to consume 100 to 1,000 bottles of red wine a day.

Alcohol, in general, may be heart-healthy because it thins the blood and improves circulation. This can be advantageous to individuals who already are facing blockages in arteries and need improved blood flow. But grapes alone may also relax blood vessels allowing blood to flow more easily.

Red wine also contains vitamin C and other healthy substances, which can improve overall health.

Although there are reasons to believe red wine can be a heart-healthy addition to one's diet, doctors may be reticent to suggest it because alcohol use can present other problems, especially if it is abused. With this in mind, red or purple grape juice and whole grapes can be a viable alternative for those looking to get the benefits of resveratrol and other antioxidants without the down side of alcohol.

Grape juice provides much of the same benefits of red wine. Eating whole red or purple grapes does too, in addition to the benefit of fiber in one's diet.

For those who want to go the red wine route, remember that alcohol should be consumed in moderation. That means one drink a day for women or up to two drinks a day for men.

Learn The Different Mouth Sores

Mouth sores can be painful, embarrassing and annoying. Not all mouth sores are the same, however. Learning about the causes can enable a person to find relief or prevent them in the first place.

There are a few main types of mouth sores, of which canker sores and fever sores may be the most familiar.

Canker Sores

Canker sores are common mouth ulcers that manifest in a white or yellow sores inside of the mouth. They can form on the tongue, inside of the cheeks, the underside of lips, or on the soft palate of the mouth. Also known as aphthous ulcers, canker sores can form for a number of reasons. Stress or immune system response can bring them on. Irritation or mouth injury also can contribute to canker sores.

Canker sores are not caused by viruses or bacteria; therefore, they are not contagious. They are also relatively harmless unless they become infected. Because they are an open sore, they can be a gateway for germs to enter the body. If a canker sore has not healed in around 2 weeks, a doctor should be consulted. That's because the first sign of oral cancer is a mouth sore that does not heal. Therefore, a cancerous mouth sore may inadvertently be mistaken as a canker sore and overlooked.

Treatment for canker sores generally focuses on reducing pain. Topical analgesics may be used. For those who find braces or dental appliances cause canker sores, an oral wax to cover areas that rub the mouth or adjustments may be needed.



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Mouth sores can be caused by irritation or viruses. It pays to know which is the case.

Fever Sores

Fever sores, also known as fever blisters, are fluid-filled blisters that form on the lips, roof of the mouth and gums. They may last 7 to 10 days, at which point they may rupture and crust over.

Unlike canker sores, fever sores are caused by a virus that becomes active. They are the result of the herpes simplex virus, the same virus that is responsible for genital herpes, though the mouth sores are usually from HSV-1 and not HSV-2, the common cause for genital herpes. As many as 90 percent of American adults has been exposed to the HSV-1 virus, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center. The virus lies dormant but can be activated by conditions such as fever, trauma, hormonal changes, exposure to sunlight, and stress.

Fever sores are contagious and can be acquired through sharing drinks straws or by kissing. They are often treated with

an antiviral agent and a protective barrier ointment. Do not squeeze the blisters, and wash hands after touching a blister. The virus can be spread to the eyes or the genital area upon contact with these areas of the body.

Leukoplakia

Leukoplakia is a condition caused by excess cell growth in the mouth. It can form on the cheeks, gums or tongue. It is gen-

erally found in tobacco users or those with ill-fitting dentures that cause irritation. This condition can progress to cancer and should be monitored by a doctor or dentist.

Oral Cancer

Oral cancer can manifest itself in a number of ways, including sores that do not heal over time. It also may be identified by rough spots, crusts, bumps, lumps, swellings, or other unusual things on the lips, gums or inside the mouth. Unexplained bleeding of the mouth may also indicate oral cancer.

Because oral cancer may often be mistaken for trivial mouth issues, anything suspicious should be brought to the attention of a dentist or doctor. Individuals with a family history of cancer, those who smoke or use other tobacco products or consume alcohol excessively should be regularly screened for oral cancer.

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