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Integrative Holistic Health

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**April Health Tips:  Get Ready For Spring Cleaning**

BEWARE: DUST MITES, MOLD & TOXINS = ALLERGIES

ASTHMA, SINUS PROBLEMS, HEADACHES, & IMMUNE SYSTEM WEAKNESS

The first thing that can help anyone who has to do deep cleaning in a home stay healthy, is to buy some good quality face masks that are calibrated for the cleaning that is being accomplished. For example, you would need one level of mask for simple cleaning of house dust, and another if you were going to be washing the walls in a mold-covered room. The second requirement is a good pair of non-latex gloves.

Our homes are a major source of toxins and when we clean we are getting exposed to a significantly larger proportion of these toxins. This is a combination of 'stirring up the dust' as well as handling and breathing in fumes from the cleaning products that we choose to use. For both of these reasons it is a good idea to wear an appropriate mask and a good pair of gloves. If we typically wear glasses, they will help to protect our eyes from particles that 'fly' our way. If not, a pair of goggles may be needed, depending on the area and level of cleaning we are attempting. Our skin and eyes, mouth and nose will allow entrance to many toxins if we are not protected. While this may seem extreme to some, environmental illness is definitely on the rise, and in a few short years those who are laughing at these suggestions will be among the first to don protective clothing, and use non-toxic cleaning products, while cleaning their homes.

Here are some tips about ‘what and where’ toxins exist in our homes, and how to protect ourselves while undertaking our Spring Cleaning.

DUST MITES

35 million people in the U. S. suffer from dust mite allergy symptoms. About 80% of dust in a building comes from shedding our own skin. We shed several million cells each and every day. The rest of our house dust comes from our clothing and furniture, from exhaled or sneezed/coughed viruses, pet dander, carpeting, mold, insect residues, food debris and outside dirt.

Dust mites are tiny arachnids that live off of the dust in our homes. They are smaller than a grain of salt. Hundreds of them live in a tiny pinch of dust. We become allergic to 15 or more of their proteins that are found in their feces. The feces residue becomes easily airborne and is then inhaled. Flea dust is responsible for triggering 80% of asthma attacks and also is responsible for causing runny noses, sinus infections, headaches, and atopic dermatitis.

\*Dust mites live in abundance in our pillows and mattresses, and bedding. Over 25% of a pillow’s weight can be dust mite residue!

\*A bed mattress holds billions of dust mites; We provide them with about 1 pint of moisture vapor each night through our breathing and perspiration. Whenever we turn over their dust is stirred up and we breathe it in.

MOLD SPORES

Mold is very dangerous. It causes a host of immune system problems and allergies and asthma, headaches and dizziness and fatigue. It can lodge in the sinuses causing sinus congestion and infections; it can lodge in the lungs causing lung congestion that feels like the flu or a bad cold, but does not go away. It can injure our liver. Mold lives in dark, moist places such as in the bathrooms, or closets. Anywhere that air does not circulate.

TOXINS

Toxins exist in the dust particles in our homes. These can include all of the toxic substances that exist ‘outside’ such as pesticide residues, fungicides, mold spores, heavy metals and more. Then there are the toxins that are used in our everyday cleaning products. These can irritate the sinuses, throat and lungs. They can injure our entire body. If you take the time to read the labels on your cleaning products, you will note that some say if any gets on your skin, you must wash it off and get to an emergency room. First of all, why choose those products? Secondly, if you do choose them, we must protect our skin and mouth eyes and nose from exposure.

**Steps to Take For A Healthy Home Free Of Allergens:**

\* It is recommended for a person with allergies and/or asthma to get a new pillow every 6 months.

\* Only use Organic Cotton Sheets, wash weekly. May use a Borax solution soaking 10 minutes at 125% F, and dry in hot dryer

\* Only use Organic Cotton or Wool Blankets. If you have a down comforter, put in inside of an Organic Cotton Duvet Cover. Clean the cover and comforter frequently

\*Mattresses and box springs should be encased in zippered, dust-proof covers. Make sure they are ORGANIC NOT CHEMICALLY TREATED COVERS. We don’t want to breathe in formaldehyde/pesticide off gassing.

\*Carpets are likely to have 100 times more allergens than wood floors. Besides hardwood, tile and vinyl are good flooring alternatives.

\*Vacuum (use a hepa filter vacuum) and *Dust with a damp cloth only*

\*Replace polyester drapes with natural fibers and/or blinds. Wash frequently, and wet-cloth dust blinds

\*Change heating/air conditioner filters every 1-3 months. Use superior allergen filters, down to .01 micron hepa filters. Don’t get the ‘washable metal’ filters. Cleaning them you will breathe in toxins

\*AIR FILTERS are important. Certainly for the Living Room and Bedrooms. Again check to see if they are .01 - .03 Micron filters.

\*Use ONLY natural products for washing your bedding/clothing. Wash bedding in HOT water and dry hot.

\*Put children’s plush toys into the wash -- or you can put them in a plastic bag and freeze for one hour but it is best not to have plush toys at all.

\*Mop floors with ONLY natural products UNSENTED. Most soaps have chemicals that are dangerous to breathe/absorb for everyone. Read the labels – if it says toxic don’t buy it. Can also use ½ cup Borax to one gallon water.

\*Don’t use feather dusters, dust mops or brooms.

\*Dust light fixtures and ceiling fans with a wet cloth, and wear a mask.

@ PROFESSIONALLY have cleaned any mold in ducts, basements, bathrooms, kitchens, and closets. Have someone come to your home and check the air quality to see if you have mold. LEAVE THE HOME during the cleaning, and have them put a HEPA FILTER on for two days after. Don’t stay overnight in your home for two nights, let the HEPA FILTER take out the mold spores. If the mold is heavy you may have to stay away for one full week.

\*Dehumidifiers may be a good idea if your house has high humidity. It is best to keep humidity below 50%.

\*Animal dander, and the dust that their fur collect cause allergic reactions, so keep pets out of bedrooms

\*Keep windows closed on bad air quality days.

Following these health tips while cleaning your home this Spring, will help to assure a healthy and strong immune system, and an allergen reduced home for your family and friends.

Emi Miller, R.N., HN-BC, L.Ac, N.D., has studied and practiced Eastern Philosophies, Eastern and Western Medical Practices, and Healing Arts from the roots of ancient traditions for the past thirty years. Because of her unique blending of Eastern and Western traditions she is highly sought as a speaker on integrative healthcare by a broad range of educational, professional and civic groups. Over the past thirty years Dr. Miller has led numerous classes, meditations and workshops throughout North America. She is the owner of the Integrative, Holistic Healing in Charlotte, NC, and has been in private practice as a Holistic Physician for the past twenty five years. She is a Registered Nurse, and a Certified Holistic Nurse,  a Diplomate of the National Association for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, where she is certified as a Asian Bodywork Therapist; a Naturopathic Physician; Licensed Acupuncturist