



Reducing hidden indoor allergy triggers this winter

Sneezing and blowing your nose in the cooler weather could be a sign you have allergies and not a cold, warns the National Asthma Council Australia.

This World Allergy Week, 7 to 13 April, the National Asthma Council's Sensitive Choice Program is here to help the one in five Australians with allergies and one in nine with asthma reduce their exposure to common household triggers such as mould, dust mites and indoor pollutants, before winter starts.

National Asthma Council Director, Allergy Specialist and Immunologist Dr Sara Barnes says the hardest part for many people with allergies is figuring out what, exactly, is causing their symptoms.

'Many people think that allergies are only a problem with spring hay fever, but allergens can cause issues throughout the year. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to help work out whether allergies are causing your itchy, runny nose or wheezy chest.'

'During autumn many areas of Australia experience mould problems following heavy rain, as well as a spike in dust mite populations – the tiny microscopic creatures that get into beds, couches and carpets – which have the potential to cause problems for someone with asthma or allergies who is allergic to them.'

Sensitive Choice® Program Manager, Adele Taylor, says that while studies show dust mite levels can increase two to three-fold during late autumn, there are easy ways to fight off winter allergens.

'Once you know your personal triggers, think about how you could reduce your exposure within the home by following these simple steps. You could make a real difference to your health as well as your indoor environment.'

National Asthma Council tips for living better with asthma and/or allergies this winter:

- **House dust mites** like moderate temperatures and high humidity. Remove extra cushions and soft toys from beds; cover your mattress, quilt and pillows with mite-resistant cases; and don't forget to wash sheets, pillow cases and pet bedding weekly in water 55 degrees or above.
- **Mould** needs long periods of humidity to grow which means bathrooms and built-in robes are hotspots. Watch out for condensation; air your house regularly; seal bathroom and roof leaks, and make sure you have enough natural ventilation.
- **Cats and dogs** are the most common cause of pet allergies however guinea pigs, rabbits, birds, mice and rats can also trigger asthma or allergies. Keep pets out of bedrooms, off carpets and away from soft furnishings.

Another way to reduce allergy and asthma triggers in day-to-day life is to select products and services that have been rigorously reviewed by the Sensitive Choice program and which carry the reassuring blue butterfly logo.

Find out how you can manage your allergies and asthma at [Sensitive Choice](#) or visit the [World Allergy Week](#) to learn more about allergies.

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For further information, or to arrange an interview with a National Asthma Council Australia spokesperson, please contact:

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