



Spring into action to reduce household allergy and asthma triggers

National Asthma Week - September 1 - 7

Spring brings warmer weather but also an environment which can seriously affect people managing asthma and allergies.

September 1 to 7 is National Asthma Week, and National Asthma Council Australia and Sensitive Choice are encouraging the 2.5 million Australians with asthma and one in three with allergies to take steps to reduce common household triggers.

Adele Taylor, Program Manager, Sensitive Choice® at the National Asthma Council Australia says that having a healthy home is key to keeping families healthy and well during the spring months.

“If you or your child has asthma, you can create the best home environment possible by knowing which asthma triggers are at work and minimising exposure to them. Limiting your exposure to pollen – particularly in your home - can be a big help,” said Ms Taylor. “Most people affected by spring hay fever are allergic to pollen, so reducing exposure to that trigger – particularly in your home – can be a big help.”

“Older and unrenovated homes are more likely to contain asthma and allergy triggers, many of which can be repaired or eliminated through simple changes, whether by cleaning or using Sensitive Choice® approved products that may reduce allergens or irritants in day to day life. “

During September, Harvey Norman and Sensitive Choice have joined forces to encourage consumers to improve their living environments and reduce allergy triggers.

Allergy and asthma triggers vary from person to person but common triggers in many homes include grass pollen, dust and dust mites, animal dander, mould and moisture, fragrances, including air freshener and chemicals (VOCs/PGEs).

Ms Taylor says that two of the biggest triggers are dust mites and mould, though many people aren't aware that mould grows in more places than just bathrooms.

“Mould is often seen in wardrobes, especially when there is an ensuite or bathroom close by, therefore there is more moisture in the air. Also, don't forget to look under beds and at the back of the pantry.”

Follow these tips so that your family can live and breathe easier this Spring:

- Wash sheets, pillowcases, and soft toys weekly in water hotter than 55°C.
- Cover mattresses, quilts and pillows with dust mite-resistant protectors.
- Open curtains and air bedding in the sunshine and give them a regular clean.

- Consider venetian blinds or flat blinds, which are easier to clean than heavy curtains. External shutters are another option.
- Use a damp or electrostatic cloth to dust hard surfaces (including floors). Avoid feather dusters and dry dusting cloths because they just stir up dust.
- If you have allergies, ask someone else to do the vacuuming, as this increases allergen in the air for up to 20 minutes.
- Consider using a vacuum cleaner with an asthma and allergy sensitive HEPA filter.
- If it's your child who has allergies keep them away from the room while cleaning.
- Keep rooms dry and well ventilated.
- Clear out the clutter.

Sensitive Choice® has helped Australians reduce their allergy reactions for many years. Its partners provide funds for research and education led by the National Asthma Council to reduce the health, social and economic impacts of asthma and allergies both in Australia and overseas.

“Products marked Sensitive Choice® have been assessed by an independent and voluntary panel. So, next time you go shopping, look for the reassuring blue butterfly on product packaging, including bedding, cleaning products, vacuum cleaners, and more, “said Ms Taylor.

One in ten Australians has asthma and one in three has allergies. Asthma affects people of all ages, but symptoms usually start during childhood. Asthma is the most common chronic health problem in children. It affects 10 per cent of children nationally and is the leading cause of emergency room visits.

To help identify and tackle household hidden triggers, Sensitive Choice has a series of 12 one-minute Healthy Homes videos available. Visit the Sensitive Choice® website www.sensitivechoice.com for products and services that may be a better choice for you and your family.

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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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