

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

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There is something about the spring season that prompts us to want to spruce up our home and surroundings. The ritual of spring cleaning has been around for thousands of years, and in many cultures, the warmer weather gave people the opportunity to open doors and windows to bring in fresh air, and get rid of the damp air inside the home from the colder winter months. Although these cleaning tasks can be daunting, reducing exposure to what you are allergic to can help to reduce symptom flare-ups. Here is a checklist which can help you get organized with your spring-cleaning tasks.

- Wear a mask when you are cleaning.
- Get rid of clutter.
- If your pillows are more than 3 years old, replace them. Ideally, you should not have feather bedding, as dust mites tend to accumulate more in feather bedding. Make sure that the allergy covers on the pillows, mattress and boxsprings are intact.
- Vacuum upholstered items such as couches and mattresses, ideally with a HEPA filtered vacuum.
- Mop regularly using a Swiffer.
- Clean areas which are not regularly cleaned, such as the area under and behind the bed, nightstands, shelving units and ceiling lights and fans.
- Fix leaks. Check for any mold/mildew in the home which could have accumulated during the winter months. Use a bleach solution, but make sure that you do so in a well-ventilated area.

Now that we have tackled the “indoor” tasks, it is equally important to make sure that outside living areas are addressed as well. For our gardeners out there, it is very tempting to go to the local nursery and purchase what catches our eye, but we should try to make the best choices possible to create an allergy-friendly yard.

- In general, avoid gardening chores in the early morning, as pollen counts are usually higher during this time of the day.
- While it has gardening benefits, using mulch can promote the growth of mold. If you must use mulch, use a thin layer, or consider using gravel or ground granite.
- Keep lawns trimmed to about 2 inches in height. This will help prevent pollen from being dispersed into the air. More and more people are considering the installation of artificial turf, as this can also help with water conservation.
- For those planning a relandscaping project, avoid Alder, Ash, Aspen, Beech, Birch, Box Elder, Cedar, Cottonwood, Elm, Hickory, Maple, Mulberry, Oak, Olive, Palm, Pine, Poplar, Sycamore, Walnut, Willow, Cypress, Juniper, Bermuda, Fescue, Johnson, June, Orchard, Perennial Rye, Redtop, Sweet Vernal and Timothy, as these species are much more likely to cause allergies, as opposed to Apple, Cherry, Fern Pine, Dogwood, English Holly, Magnolia, Pear, Plum, Red Maple Azalea, Boxwood, English Yew, Hibiscus and Hydrangea.

Besides avoiding indoor and outdoor allergens as much as possible, it is also important to make sure that you have an allergy treatment plan in place in the event your symptoms flare. If you have not had a recent visit with us, now is a good time to meet with one of our providers to make sure that that you are doing everything possible to manage your allergies. As always, we are here to help.