

al, but not always practical. To reduce contaminants, vacuum your upholstery and window coverings often, encase bedding with impermeable non-allergenic plastic covers and purchase only washable non-allergenic stuffed animals.

High in humidity, bathrooms and the kitchen, laundry room and basement are particularly prone to harboring biological contaminants. Install fans in your bathrooms to cut down on the moisture that clings to surfaces after a shower or bath. Add an exhaust fan above your range that vents outside to reduce humidity and eliminate irritating cooking fumes. Vent your clothes dryer outside, not into another room or crawl space. Better yet, hang clothing outside to dry whenever possible. Use a sealant on basement walls and make sure rainwater is directed away from the house to prevent moisture problems.

Maintaining a moderate humidity level in the home is important to minimize mite and mold growth. Too much humidity encourages biological growth, while too little inhibits the natural protective ability of the mucous membranes in the nasal cavity to filter out airborne particles. According to experts, you should keep the humidity level between 35 and 40 percent. When humidity levels soar or drop, you may need to use a humidifier to keep humidity within a comfortable range.

Experts recommend cleaning the house on a regular basis to control biological organisms. However, don't go overboard, or you may actually intensify the problem by raising levels of airborne contaminants. Clean the house once a week and ask family members who are highly allergic to leave or wear

a dust mask.

To help facilitate the cleaning process, keep electronics, CDs, VCR tapes and books in closed cabinets. Keep collectibles and knickknacks to a bare minimum or put them in glass cabinets for display. Use a damp cloth to wipe surfaces. Never use feather dusters – they only spread dust, not collect it. Use a vacuum cleaner with HEPA certified bags. These high-efficiency particulate-arresting bags gather the most microscopic organisms. Replace the bags frequently to prohibit bacterial growth within the vacuum. Wipe blinds with a damp cloth. Vertical blinds actually accumulate less dust than horizontal blinds, so use verticals whenever possible.

In addition to keeping bathrooms well ventilated, use washable, mildew-proof paint for walls and hard surface flooring. Keep tub and sink drains free of hair and soap scum, replace missing or discolored caulking with new and wash bathroom fixtures with a bleach solution.

Treat kitchen surfaces the same as bathroom surfaces. Keep the drip tray of the refrigerator clear of standing water. Wash it periodically with a bleach solution. Cover pans whenever possible to minimize irritants.

Breathe better by following some of these guidelines to eliminate many of the biological contaminants in your home. For further information, visit the Jamestown library or browse the Internet. ✂

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