

## Breathe Easier this Spring

For many Americans spring means uncomfortable outdoor allergies. Coughing. Sneezing. Wheezing. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, asthma and allergies strike 1 out of every 4 Americans and are the leading chronic diseases in the U.S. among all age groups. And it's not just outdoor air that's the culprit. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) reports indoor air levels of many pollutants may be 2-5 times, and occasionally, more than 100 times higher than outdoor levels. Indoor air pollutants are particularly concerning because statistics show most people spend as much as 70% of their time indoors.

The consequences of airborne contaminants are reduced health and comfort, as well as a decrease in the efficiency and increase in the costs associated with your heating and cooling equipment. Here are some tips to help improve the indoor air quality in your home.



### **Change your heating (and/or cooling) system air filter**

Air filters are designed to collect dust, dirt and other nasty things; such as pollen, bacteria, smoke, smog, pet dander and plant and mold spores. By changing or cleaning your filter monthly you'll help cut down on the amount of dust and pollutants in your air. Keeping a clean air filter in your system also helps increase the energy efficiency and prolongs the life of your heating and cooling system.

#### **Upgrade your filter**

You can switch from a standard 1" filter to a higher quality filter to increase the filtration of particles in the air in your home. A MERV (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value) rating is the standard method for comparing the efficiency of an air filter. The higher the MERV rating, the better the filter is at removing particles from the air. Filters with higher ratings not only remove more particles from the air, they also remove smaller particles. Many of these filters are readily available at your local hardware store. We do recommend caution, however, as these filters often create air flow restrictions that may create damage when used at the warm air return locations in the grills of the system. If you want to upgrade to a higher MERV filter but have multiple returns, consider a whole house filter as it will be easier on your system, will more effectively clean your air, and won't require filter changes as frequently.

#### **Air cleaners**

Air cleaners can improve your health by keeping your entire house cleaner. Air cleaners help protect your furnishings and save you the time and aggravation of continuous dusting and cleaning. A whole-house cleaner can help provide relief from irritants – up to 40 times more efficiently than standard furnace filters. Air cleaners also prevent the buildup of dust and dirt in your heating and cooling equipment, which can otherwise reduce the efficiency of your system by as much as 25%.

#### **Air purifiers**

An air purifier whole-house filtration system is the most effective air cleaning system available. It thoroughly cleans and filters out 99.98% of allergens from the filtered air. It is up to 100 times more effective than a standard 1" filter. An air purifier will deliver cleaner air, and more of it!

#### **Clean your ducts**

NADCA (National Duct Cleaning Association) recommends homeowners take off the cover of an air vent and look down the vent with a mirror and flashlight or digital camera. If the ducts are covered with dust or debris, it's time to have your ducts cleaned. NADCA says a thorough duct cleaning will not only clean up the air inside your home but also help your system to work more efficiently, saving you money.

#### **Keep a clean home**

Dusting and vacuuming on a regular basis helps reduce the dirt, dust and dust mites in your home. Make sure to dust around windows and doors as well as your window treatments. Don't forget to dust those hard to reach places as well! Use a dusting tool that captures rather than re-distributes the particles, such as a microfiber or damp cloth. Another good tip is to use a vacuum

cleaner that utilizes a HEPA filter so that you're not releasing the dust right back into the air. And having your carpets cleaned annually (more frequently if you have pets) helps reduce contaminants in the air as well.

**Prevention**

Stopping dust at the source is a great way to control it. Place mats at all entrances of your home to prevent dust from entering via shoes, boots, paws, etc. Removing shoes at the door is another good tactic. Also consider installing hardwood floors in your home versus carpets. Carpeting traps particles and with every step you take those particles are released back into the air.

Keeping the air clean inside your home helps you and your family breathe easier and stay healthy!

Sources: [www.aafa.org/](http://www.aafa.org/)  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)  
[www.healthyhomeinstitute.com](http://www.healthyhomeinstitute.com)  
[www.NADCA.com](http://www.NADCA.com)  
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