

the Asthma & Allergy
Green Guide to

Relief



Control asthma and allergy triggers in your home >>>

Why trust

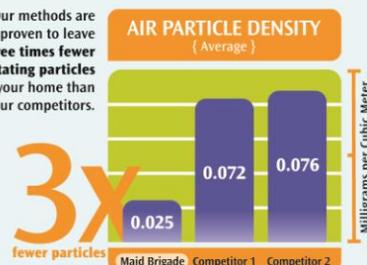
something as important as your family's health to
ANY house cleaning service?



Maid Brigade is the leader in green cleaning for the health of you and your family. We've developed the nation's first **Green Clean Certified**® cleaning standard that is designed to protect your home and your family from the harmful effects of most traditional cleaning methods. Our proprietary and exclusive green cleaning program is not only safer for your family, but you can also count on us for reliable service that is consistent and thorough every time.

Trust Maid Brigade.

Our methods are proven to leave **three times fewer irritating particles** in your home than our competitors.



*Source: Quest Environmental Services & Technologies, 10/07



For a free estimate, call
888.79GREEN
 or visit
www.maidbrigade.com



For more information about protecting your home and family from the hidden dangers in most cleaning systems, visit
www.greenclean certified.com

Maybe a cleaning service that cleans
is right for you.

Green

Most people feel like house cleaning duty is their “2nd shift” – just one more job to do after spending a full day in the paid workforce. They know house cleaning is necessary and important, but also time-consuming. A house cleaning service alleviates the burden of regular cleaning routines, but one that is expert in green cleaning also frees you from time consuming and often confusing research.

A green cleaning service can make it easier to maintain a clean and healthy indoor environment. Not all green cleaning services follow the same processes and some are more committed than others. But a service that is *TRULY* green will stay on top of emerging scientific and medical developments and use the healthiest, most effective green cleaning technologies and practices available. Did we mention the fact that they bring the supplies and equipment? You don’t have to know what to buy, which surfaces you can clean with a particular solution and which you can’t, or whether your equipment meets green standards for indoor air quality.

Ask around & compare to find a company you know you can trust in your home and to understand their similarities and differences in what they offer. Not all green cleaning services are totally green, for instance. Some emphasize individual elements of a green program and others take a more holistic approach. But if you’re choosing green cleaning for health reasons, you should go with the holistic approach. **Why rid your home of certain contaminants only to introduce others?**

Choose a service that’s committed to
protecting your health.

It’s not just about the chemicals you use. That’s a big part of it, for sure. But don’t forget about the other equipment and supplies. Paper towels OR re-useable cleaning cloths? Cotton OR powerful and durable microfiber? Cloth-bag vacuum OR closed canister? All of these choices contribute to the quality of the indoor environment and a true green cleaning program will use every method available to clean your home in the healthiest manner possible.

A healthy indoor environment starts with a focus on preventing cleaning liquids, and their residues and vapors, to contaminate the air with chemical toxins. But don’t underestimate the importance of removing microscopic particles from the air. Specialized vacuum technology powerful enough to remove dust, dirt, mold, pollen and dust mites will go a long way towards reducing asthma and allergy triggers so everyone can breathe more easily.



Looking for safer alternatives?



The basic ingredients for natural cleaning products might already be in your pantry:

DISTILLED WHITE VINEGAR – good for dissolving grease, dirt, soap, scum and mineral deposits. Also absorbs odors.

BAKING SODA – an effective replacement for harsh scouring powders. Mildly abrasive and naturally deodorizing.

BORAX – good for cleaning, disinfecting and deodorizing.

LEMON JUICE – cuts grease, freshens and deodorizes, fights household bacteria.

WATER – distilled is best, but tap is fine.

CASTILE SOAP – all-purpose cleaner for around the house.

HYDROGEN PEROXIDE – (3%) a natural anti-bacterial, whitener and mold cleaner.

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

For an **all-purpose cleaner**, combine 3 T white vinegar, ½ tsp washing soda, ½ tsp castile soap and 2 cups hot water in a spray bottle. Shake and spray!

To **remove rust**, sprinkle a little salt on the rust. Squeeze a lime over the salt until it is well soaked. Let the mixture set for two to three hours. Use the leftover rind to rub the residue.

For a good **window cleaner**, mix 3 T white vinegar with 1 gal cool water. Wipe with a newspaper to avoid streaks.

Sprinkling baking soda in the bottom of garbage bags will help eliminate of **control odors** as you add trash.

Half a lemon stored in your fridge, uncovered, will help control and eliminate unpleasant smells.

Anywhere that moisture is a problem such as cupboards and under sinks, place a bowl of baking soda to help **control humidity**. You will need to stir the powder occasionally for maximum effective life.

NATURAL PET SHAMPOO

Mix 2 C warm water, 2 tsp liquid castile soap, 2 T pure aloe vera gel and 1 tsp vegetable oil. Combine all ingredients in a jar and shake to blend. Wet your pet's coat, then work in shampoo a few tablespoons at a time, lathering as you go. Rinse thoroughly and towel dry your pet as much as it will stand.

IN THE KITCHEN

To **clean the microwave**, heat a bowl of water and lemon slices in your microwave for about 45 seconds, then wipe. Stains will be easier to remove and old food odors will be neutralized.

A teaspoon of lemon juice added to your dishwashing detergent can help boost **grease cutting power**.

Hot lemon juice and baking soda makes a good **drain cleaner** that's safe for septic systems.

Rub lemon juice into your wooden chopping board, leave overnight and then rinse. Wood chopping boards appear to have **anti-bacterial** properties anyway, but the lemon will help kill off any remaining germs plus neutralize odors.

For a great **oven cleaner**, combine 5 C warm water, 2 tsp borax, and 2 T castile soap in a spray bottle. Shake to mix. Spray and wait 20 minutes, then wipe clean and rinse with water.

Clean **stainless steel** sinks with a paste of baking soda and vinegar. Mix it up and apply with a sponge. Don't let the foaming scare you – it works great!

LAUNDRY

Make a paste with baking soda and a tiny bit of water and work it into stains prior to washing to help remove them from the fabric. For perspiration stains, let the paste set for about an hour before washing. Half a cup of baking soda added to a full load of laundry will help brighten your wash and remove odors. Add 1 – 2 T Epsom salts to the wash cycle to keep clothes bright. To remove ring around the collar rub undiluted shampoo on the stain and launder as usual.

IN THE BATHROOM

Spray fresh lemon juice on hard water scale build-up around faucets, wait 10 minutes and rinse.

Use a scrub paste made from baking soda and a tiny bit of water to scrub soap scum in tubs and showers.

To **clean tile**, mix ½ C. vinegar with ½ tsp all purpose liquid detergent and 2 C. very hot tap water. Combine in a spray bottle and mix well. Spray on, then rinse with a sponge.

To **clean the toilet bowl**, pour 1 C. borax into the bowl and let it sit for a few hours. Use the toilet brush to scrub, then flush. Spray straight vinegar onto the rim, seat and top. Scrub the rim with the brush and use a sponge or cloth to wipe. Re-spray the rim and don't rinse.

Antibacterial spray can be made from water and pure essential lavender oil. Mix 1 C. water and 1 tsp lavender oil in a spray bottle and shake to mix. Spray and wait 15 minutes before wiping or don't rinse at all.

NOTE: Label all home concoctions and date them so you can be sure of what you're using. **WARNING:** Vinegar and baking soda cannot be used on all surfaces. Do some research first!

Traditional cleaning products “dirty” the home, as far as asthma or allergy sufferers are concerned.

Contradiction the cleaning

Air Fresheners & Fragranced Cleaners

A common misconception about cleaning products is that unless the smell of the cleaning product is evident, the home is not clean. Consumers have been trained by marketers of cleaning products for generations that a clean smell equals a clean home. With product fragrances to evoke memories of the ocean, the mountains, the pines, and even just plain “original” we are cued to put fragrance in the perception of a clean home.

Fragrances in perfumes, body care products, cleaning products and air fresheners are suspended in the air by chemical additives designed to help them linger in the air. These chemicals are then at nose level and easily inhaled.

De-greasers & Solvents

Solvents put off strong vapors and are prone to absorption through the lungs or skin. Organic solvents irritate the respiratory track and have been linked to bronchial asthma in occupational studies.

An Australian study which links environmental factors in the home with childhood asthma identified the presence of solvents as a contributing factor and suggested the highest asthma risk are associated with benzene, ethylbenzene and toluene.

Bleach & Ammonia

Bleach and ammonia are corrosive to the lungs. Asthma and allergy sufferers have compromised respiratory function and these corrosives will exacerbate that weakness. Avoid using bleach and ammonia for this and many other reasons.

Over-spray

One of the simplest things you can do to help keep the impact of cleaning to a minimum is to be aware that over-spray broadcasts contaminants which affect every member of the family, not just the asthma or allergy sufferer. Spray cleaning solutions into your cloth, not on the surface you are cleaning to avoid unnecessary disbursement of contaminants indoors..

VOCs

Volatile Organic Compounds are emitted as gases suspending themselves in the air. VOCs include an array of chemicals, some of which may have short and long term adverse health effects. VOCs commonly are present in perfumes, air fresheners, disinfectants and deodorizers. These compounds pose a variety of human health hazards and collectively are thought to be reproductive toxins, neurotoxins, liver toxins and carcinogens. But the asthma or allergy sufferer only cares that VOCs help toxins in cleaning products become easier to inhale.



Hire a pro or do your own whole-home to find other hidden triggers.

Audit

“Sick building syndrome” refers to an abundance of acute health problems for the occupants of a building, which appear to be linked to time spent in that building, but no specific illness or cause can be identified. The concept applies to homes as well. Lack of energy and productivity, memory loss, mood disorders and asthma and allergy problems are some of the symptoms. Indoor air quality is a significant contributing factor.

There are 17 potential areas of your home or building

where asthma and allergy triggers can be found, according to the Indoor Air Quality Association. You can go to their website (www.iaga.org) to view them all. Here are some of the key areas that deserve your attention.

Home Furnishings

▶ Carpets harbor pollen, dust, dust mites, insect droppings, pet dander, mold and mildew spores, hair, and chemical overspray residues and emit VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds resulting from the manufacturing ingredients). Consider area rugs or better yet, hard flooring surfaces. Whatever your solution, vacuum floors regularly to reduce offensive particulates. ▶ Drapes, valances, upholstery and other textiles have a “tooth” to them and provide an easy place to which these sorts of particulate irritants can cling. Try wood or metal blinds as an alternative to drapes and vacuum your textile furnishings frequently. ▶ Choose furniture carefully. Many “wood” pieces are really a composite material which can emit VOC triggers.

The Home Office

▶ Computers, copiers, printers, chargers, surge protectors and other devices create electro-magnetic fields and ozone and emit fine particulates which can irritate respiratory passages. ▶ The glues used in bulletin boards and modular desk furniture contain VOCs. ▶ The home office is also a contributor of other kinds of toxins, including neurotoxins and endocrine disruptors, which is something to consider given that this area is in a family setting.

mommy,
how come

when the building is “sick” the people
have the symptoms

Chimneys, Exhausts & Ducts

Don't forget the hidden passageways. ▶ Chimneys should be inspected regularly, whether or not you burn fires, to make sure they draft adequately and are free from obstruction, so as to prevent the build-up of irritating or dangerous gases. Check for improper flashing and cracked or crumbling masonry, which can admit moisture. ▶ Ducts should be cleaned every few years to remove accumulating particles from the indoor air stream. ▶ Exhausts should be checked for back-drafting of combustion gases and incomplete combustion.

Pests and their Evidence

Rodents, roaches and other pests leave – shall we say – by-products which trigger asthma and allergy attacks. The minute dust cast from these by-products into the airflow is enough to irritate the respiratory tracts and trigger attacks. Check behind your furnace, dryer and other out-of-sight places and under insulation in the attic routinely and remove evidence of pests with a HEPA filtered closed-canister vacuum to contain and remove these contaminants





mold and *mildew*
thrive in moist environments.

Mold Allergies

▶ Mold and mildew are fungi and their seeds, or spores, become airborne through natural air circulation or specific agitation to the mold or mildew of some sort. The spores attach to the lining of the nose and cause allergic symptoms. Spores can also get into the lungs and cause allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis. Symptoms are often exaggerated in a damp basement or moldy room. Air cleaners or purifiers will not help unless the sources of moisture are reduced or eliminated.

Reduce Moisture Indoors

▶ To prevent the growth of mold and mildew, try to maintain a relative indoor humidity below 45%. ▶ If you have a wet basement, use a dehumidifier and routinely empty the reservoir. Scrub it with vinegar every few weeks. ▶ Raise the temperature if you can to further reduce humidity. ▶ If you have wet foundation problems in the basement, get them repaired. ▶ Grade soil to slope away from your house and run gutter downspout extensions to move stormwater a safe distance away. ▶ Always run the bathroom exhaust fan when showering (during the shower and for several minutes afterwards) and/or open a window to allow moisture to escape so that mold and mildew will have a less hospitable environment in your bathroom. ▶ Run the air conditioner if you have one, and use a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter attachment to trap spores before they enter your home. ▶ Scour sinks and tubs *at least* every other week because soap scum and other films on grout and tile are a great food source for fungi. ▶ Clean your garbage cans frequently, especially if they have lids. ▶ Repair plumbing leaks and roof leaks. ▶ Make sure the dryer vent and hose apparatus is secure and in good repair.

“If indoor humidity is above 50%, risks of fungus growth rise steeply.”

- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.



You might be the perfect host for some unwanted houseguests...

dust mites!

WHY IT'S AN ON-GOING ISSUE & WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



Major Allergy Trigger

We admit, it's pretty gross. Dust mites feed off of dead skin cells and as long as there are humans and their furry friends in the mix, there will be an abundant and constant food supply for dust mites.

Key Problem Areas in Your Home

Dust mites will congregate close to the feast – where already-shed skin cells are concentrated. Textiles trap dead skin cells. Mattresses, pillows, linens, carpet and rugs, drapes, upholstered furniture, towels and plush toys harbor dust mites. Your bed is the perfect environment for dust mites. Your mattress may house between one million and ten million dust mites. It is estimated that one ounce of dust can house 42,000 dust mites.

What You Can Do

Bedding – Vacuum **mattresses** on 5 sides as often as you can but at least monthly for the allergy sufferer. Use a specialized HEPA filter closed-canister vacuum to remove 99.9% of all particles 1 micron or greater. [SEE DIAGRAM BELOW RIGHT] Flip mattresses every 3 months and vacuum all 6 sides when you flip. Launder **linens** and covers in water that is 130°F or hotter to kill dust mites. Vacuum the **pillows** as often as weekly, and launder in water that is 130°F or hotter every 3 months (organic) or replace every 6 months (synthetic). Direct sunlight kills dust mites – on sunny days (winter and summer) hang blankets and covers outside on the line. Leave the beds unmade and open the window dressings during the day.

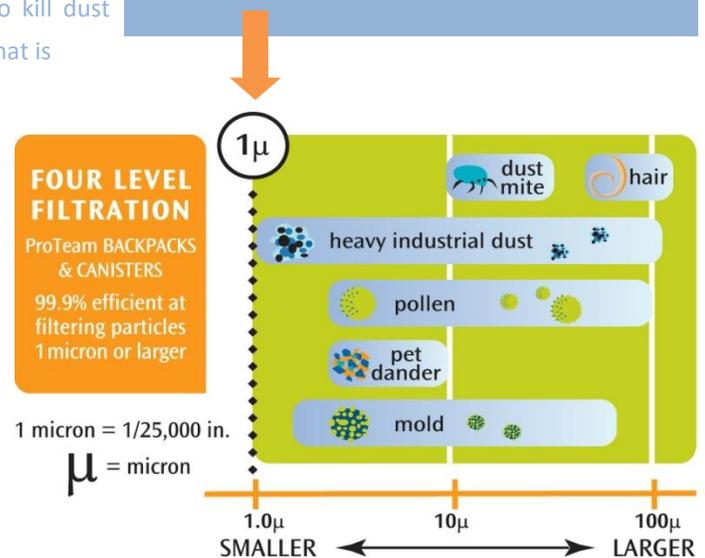
Carpet & Rugs – Vacuum with a specialized HEPA filter closed-canister vacuum at least weekly, or every few days in the rooms where an asthma or allergy sufferer spends most of his or her time.

Drapes – Vacuum these with a specialized HEPA filter closed-canister vacuum at least monthly, but more often in the bedroom of an asthma/allergy sufferer.

Beneath the Bed – Dust mites like dark places. Be sure to vacuum under the bed frequently. Doing so will also reduce an abundant food source for moths.

HEPA 4-level filtration closed-canister vacuums

It's a mouthful, isn't it? The point is, it swallows and removes dust mites and many other allergy and asthma triggers from the textile and hard surfaces of your home. Traditional vacuums can't remove this fine a particle and cloth trap bags return a fair amount of dust and other particles back into the room. Have you ever vacuumed a room when the sun was coming in at a low angle? You can see a lot of dust coming through the bag. The specialized vacuum you'll need to use removes 99.9% of all particles 1 micron or larger. In case you're wondering, 1 micron is really, really small.



Asthma & Allergy Triggers

Many common triggers for asthma and allergy attacks can be found in the home.

Some scientists theorize that exposure to indoor pollutants early in life may be an important factor in later development of asthma, although more research is necessary.

Managing your indoor environment will go a long way toward protecting your family's health and controlling asthma and allergy attacks.

This guide provides information on four main asthma/allergy concerns in the home and what you can do to minimize their impact on your family:

1. Dust Mites
2. Mold & Mildew
3. Furnishings & Ducts
4. Cleaning Products



1 in 4...
suffers from asthma or allergies

Since 1 in 4 Americans suffers from asthma or allergies, chances are that someone in your family suffers from one or both diseases.

There are **no cures** for asthma or allergies.

Childhood cases of asthma have increased 67% over the last 30 years.

During the same time period, 80,000 synthetic chemicals have been introduced.

For 80% of those chemicals, **we don't know** the developmental impact on children.

Scientists have linked many of these chemicals to asthma and allergies.

Exposure to these chemicals can be through inhalation, dermal contact, ingestion or vapor absorption.

Maintaining good indoor air quality is vital to reducing asthma and allergy triggers in the home and keeping your family healthy.

Read on to learn how you can reduce and eliminate the things that trigger attacks in your home.

