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THE ABC'S FOR KEEPING THE HOME HEALTHIER FOR CHILDREN

Dr. Alanna Levine Shares Tips to Help Minimize Allergens in the Home

ST. PAUL, Minn. – January 18, 2011 – Children often come into closer contact with their environment than adults. They put their fingers in their mouths, crawl on the floor, and touch, taste and breathe things without knowing if they are harmful. Because children's organs and respiratory, immune and neurological systems are still developing, they may be more sensitive to these harmful substances.¹

"Allergy symptoms typically begin during childhood," said Dr. Alanna Levine, Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics (FAAP). "It is important for parents to identify symptoms early and begin prevention strategies for their children right away; otherwise allergies may interfere with school, social activities, and healthy growth and development."

According to the Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, allergies are the most frequently reported chronic condition in children, limiting activities for more than 40 percent of them.² As a mom of two, Dr. Levine shares the *ABC's – Avoid, Balance and Change* – for maintaining a healthier home environment for children.

A is for Avoid: Whenever possible, avoid these irritants that often trigger allergies.

Forget the strong fragrances.

Exposure to perfume, talcum powder, hair spray, air fresheners, fabric softeners or other strong odors or sprays may aggravate allergy symptoms in those who are sensitive. Be sure that allergy prone children are not in the house whenever spraying fragrances or using strong cleaning products.

Find the best fabrics for bedding.

Avoid products made of feathers or down. Whenever possible, use hypoallergenic pillows on your child's bed. Cover pillows with allergen-proof covers, and wash the pillowcases, along with sheets and blankets, each week in hot water.

Don't allow cockroaches the opportunity to enter the home.

Cockroaches and their droppings can be a major allergy trigger to some and may also worsen asthma symptoms. To help get rid of cockroaches, keep food and garbage in containers with tight lids. Also, avoid leaving out pet food or dirty food bowls on countertops or on the floor.

B is for Balance: Keep a consistent balance in the home to help minimize allergens.

Help protect children from pollen particles.

Pollens are small particles that plants such as trees, grasses, and weeds release into the air. These pollens may harbor in the eyes, nose, and airways, causing the allergy symptoms to flair in those allergic to pollen. To help limit pollen indoors, keep the windows shut and use central air conditioning during high pollen seasons.

Take care of toys.

Give your child washable, non-allergenic stuffed toys when possible. Be sure to wash the ones played with the most every week in hot water (at least 130° F). Store other toys, dolls, and play equipment outside the bedroom or in the closet.

Clear the clutter.

Spring cleaning shouldn't just happen once a year. Make it a weekly habit to dust and sweep floors, as well as dark spots in closets and corners where dust and dirt are often overlooked.

¹ GreenGuard Environmental Institute: http://www.greenguard.org/en/indoorAirQuality/iaq_healthImpacts/iaq_childrensHealth.aspx;

² Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: <http://www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=30>; "Chronic Conditions: A Challenge for the 21st Century," *National Academy on an Aging Society*, 2000

Limit furry friend time.

Children should wash hands immediately after any contact with a furry or feathered pet. Non-allergic family members should wash pets, and clean out their animal cages or litter boxes. Parents should also consider pets that are allergen-free, like fish.

C is for Change: Change items that are easy to neglect, but are important for maintaining a healthier home.

Vacuum away the dirt.

If you have carpet, vacuum it often and thoroughly. You should also change the vacuum cleaner bag on a monthly basis.

Clean even what you can't see.

Don't forget to clean what you can't see – the air you and your child breathe. Use a high performance filter, such as a Filtrete Elite Allergen Reduction Filter from 3M, and be sure to change the filter every three months.

Fix faucets.

Mold can be found year-round throughout the home, especially in areas of high moisture. Bathrooms and damp basements are common areas for mold growth, so be sure to repair leaky faucets and pipes.

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About Alanna Levine, M.D., FAAP

Dr. Alanna Levine is a pediatrician caring for patients from birth through college. Dr. Levine works at Orangetown Pediatric Associates in New York, and is also on staff at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in New Jersey. Dr. Levine is a nationally recognized pediatrician who frequently appears in the media to educate parents on promoting health in children.

About Filtrete Filters from 3M

Filtrete high performance filters capture at least 90 percent of large airborne particles, such as household dust, pollen and mold spores, from the air passing through the filter. The filters are electrostatically charged and carry a microparticle rating (MPR) of 1200 or higher. The higher the MPR, the more microscopic particles such as smoke, smog and particles that carry bacteria and viruses are captured. Filtrete filters also help maintain airflow in heating and cooling systems, which may help prevent stress on the system and reduce the amount of energy needed to reach desired indoor air temperatures.

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