

10 tips to allergy-proof your home for fall

By Jacquelyne Froeber



Your home harbors a surprising number of sneaky allergy-causing culprits. Here's where they're hiding, and how to send them packing.

1. Clutter

A messy home = nice digs for dust mites, bugs, mold, and mice.

Recycle old newspapers, magazines, cans, and grocery bags weekly and keep the bins outside if you can.

2. Carpet

Dust mites and pet dander love carpeting and rugs, so bust out your vac weekly.

Make sure it has a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter to trap tiny particles. (Non-HEPA vacs just recirculate 'em.)

3. Bedding

Banish mites and mold by washing bedding in 130-degree water weekly.

4. Bathroom

Moist bathroom or basement walls love to breed mold.

Wipe them down with a chlorine-bleach solution (1 ounce bleach to 1 quart H₂O) to keep fungus at bay.

In the fall, mold also moves indoors via wet leaves on shoes and damp firewood.

Store wood in a separate dry space, like the garage, and keep the yard leaf-free.

5. Crumbs

Crumbs and overflowing garbage lure mice and roaches -- and their droppings can aggravate allergies.

Keep your space clean.

Also, try boric acid and traps for the pests.

6. Open windows

Refreshing fall breezes are great -- unless they usher ragweed pollen indoors.

Keep windows shut between the high-pollen-count hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. (If it's warm, keep the air conditioner running; it filters out pollen inside your home.)

Change the AC (or heater) filter monthly.

And remove shoes outside to avoid tracking in pollen particles.

7. Basement

Fight mold with a dehumidifier set between 35 and 45 percent humidity.

Dehumidifiers come in several sizes, starting at \$25.

Before you buy, get a humidity gauge (\$9; home-improvement stores) to assess how much de-moisturizing muscle you need.

8. Houseplants

Your potted plants can harbor sneeze-producing mold on their leaves.

Remove any moldy leaves immediately, and don't let water pool in the pot's tray.

Check with a plant-care specialist if the problem persists.

9. Pets

Pet dander and saliva spell trouble for 30 percent of allergy sufferers.

Washing or brushing your pet weekly (do it outside) can lower your home's dander level.

Keep dogs and cats out of the bedroom, and cover air vents with cheesecloth to keep dander from spreading from room to room.

10. Fabric furnishings

Dust weekly.

Wash blankets and throw rugs in hot water (or have them dry-cleaned).

Pick up pet fur with your vac's upholstery attachment, and try to keep pets off furniture.

Make sure the air temp is below 70 degrees, too: Mites, as well as fungus and roaches, dislike cool temps.

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