

Minnesota Homes Harbor Many Asthma Triggers, Experts Say

April 27, 2006 – When you think of air pollution, some familiar images come to mind: black smoke billowing from a smokestack, a blue haze hanging over a large city, or a vehicle tailpipe spewing out exhaust into our air. While these are all unfortunate facts of life today, there is another form of air pollution – *indoor air pollution* in our homes -- that also poses a health risk to the estimated **320,000 Minnesotans with asthma**, a chronic lung disease.

Tuesday, May 2, 2006 is **World Asthma Day**, and all month the American Lung Association of Minnesota, Minnesota Asthma Coalition and Minnesota Department of Health are focusing on raising awareness of common asthma triggers found in almost every home in the state.

“We teach people how to control their asthma, and not to let asthma control their lives,” said Penny Gottier Fena, Senior Director of Respiratory Health for the American Lung Association of Minnesota and National Director of the American Lung Association Health House program. “Clearing asthma triggers out of our homes, where we spend as much as 90 percent of our time, is an excellent beginning.”

How to ‘asthma-proof’ your home

Here are some of the most common asthma triggers found in Minnesota homes, and tips on how to reduce or eliminate them from your home:

Tobacco smoke: Do not smoke inside your home, or allow others to do so. Even the smell of tobacco on clothing can trigger an asthma episode. Secondhand smoke can cause serious harm to children. An estimated 200,000 to one million asthmatic children have their condition worsened by exposure to secondhand smoke.

Animal dander: All breeds of cats and dogs, regardless of hair length, shed dander that can trigger allergies and asthma. Keeping pets with fur or feathers out of the house is the best step. The next best step is keeping them out of bedrooms. Washing the pet weekly can help, if you are committed to keeping a cat or dog.

Dust mites: Keep the relative humidity levels in your home at 50 percent or below to inhibit the growth of dust mites. Wash bed linens, clothes, and stuffed toys weekly in hot water (140° F). Use pillow and mattress covers. Vacuum when a person with asthma is not home.

Molds: Mold cannot grow without moisture. Find the moisture source the mold is using to grow, such as a leaky roof, pipe, or window, and fix it. Carefully clean or remove materials with mold. Houseplants can also be a source of mold.

Minnesota Asthma Events

Several statewide events focusing on asthma research, education and fundraising are planned:

- An **asthma awareness event for families** is scheduled for 6-9 p.m. at the Willmar YMCA, 1000 Lakeland Drive SE in Willmar on Sunday, April 30. Call (320) 568-2471 for details.
- The May 6 **Nick Meuller Asthma Walk** in at German Park in New Ulm, Minn. honors the memory of a local teen who died from an asthma-related car crash. To register, call Erin at 507-381-8257 or email: erin.simmons@alamn.org
- The first statewide **Minnesota Asthma Walk** will be held at Boom Island Park in Minneapolis on Sat., June 3. Call (651) 227-8014 for details or visit www.alamn.org/walk

More Minnesota Asthma Resources

American Lung Association HelpLine

1-(800) LUNG-USA or 1-(800) 548-8252

American Lung Association Health House program asthma tip sheet

http://www.healthhouse.org/tipsheets/TS_asthma.pdf

(Spanish version) ALA Health House program asthma tip sheet

http://www.healthhouse.org/tipsheets/TS_spanishasthma.pdf

Minnesota Department of Health Interactive Online Asthma Plan

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/asthma/ActionPlan.html>

Minnesota Asthma Information Center

www.ALAMN.org/InfoCenter

Minnesota Asthma Coalition

<http://www.mnasthma.org/mnasthma/>