CONTROLLING ALLERGIES & ASTHMA
World Asthma Day Increases Awareness

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 17 million Americans suffer from asthma, including nearly 5 million children. To draw attention to the global burden of asthma and the need to improve asthma care worldwide, May 7, 2002 has been designated World Asthma Day.

In the United States, World Asthma Day is being coordinated by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP). Participating organizations include The Soap and Detergent Association.

One goal of the program is to spread the message that it's important that every person with asthma be diagnosed, receive appropriate treatment, learn how to manage their asthma and reduce exposure to environmental factors that make asthma worse.

Bedroom

When it comes to reducing exposure to allergens at home, The Soap and Detergent Association stresses cleaning as the first and easiest step. Dust mites in the bedroom are a major cause of asthma and allergy attacks. Regular laundering will help keep them under control. Sheets and pillows should be washed weekly. Blankets, comforters and mattress pads should be laundered at least monthly — more often for those who are severely allergic to dust mites. If this routine becomes burdensome, consider allergen-impermeable covers for pillows and comforters. In place of weekly laundering, wipe the covers with a damp sponge; launder periodically.

Electric blankets should be laundered monthly. Never dry clean an electric blanket. The chemicals may ruin the wiring. Machine wash using a gentle cycle and short agitation time (about two-to-three minutes). Don't dry in the dryer unless the care label recommends it. Take a look around the room for other items that attract dust mites, such as rugs and curtains. If they're washable, launder them regularly.

(Continued on page 2)
(Continued from page 1)

Kitchen

Anywhere food is eaten or stored may present problems for asthma sufferers. This is because food invites cockroaches, and allergens lurk in the remains and droppings of these creatures. Regular and immediate cleanup is key to controlling cockroaches. Clean up food spills and crumbs from countertops and floors. A disinfectant cleaner will kill germs that may be found in juices from raw meat, poultry or fish. Wash dishes as soon as possible. Don't let them pile up in the sink. Run the dishwasher as soon as it's full. If it takes a while to accumulate a full load, use the "rinse and hold" cycle.

Empty trash daily. Using an all-purpose or disinfectant cleaner, clean garbage cans and recycling bins frequently. Be sure the interiors are dry before replacing the liners. Use a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner to clean up food and grease from cooktops and other appliances. Clean regularly under and behind appliances. These are areas where crumbs and grease may collect. The best procedure is to vacuum first, then clean.

Living Areas

Carpets are another haven for dust mites. Children are particularly vulnerable to this source because they crawl and play on the floor. In turn, they may breathe in allergens that lurk in the carpet. While vacuuming is one obvious solution, this process throws allergens into the air, which can intensify the problem. If an allergic person is doing the vacuuming, a dust mask and swim goggles (for eye allergies) may be necessary.

Vacuum carpeted areas at least once a week, taking at least six-to-eight strokes over each area. For the most efficient pickup, use an upright vacuum or a canister style with a power nozzle. Empty the dirt collection bag when it's half full so the suction power is at its most efficient.

For more information about this year's World Asthma Day, visit the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute's web site, www.nhlbi.nih.gov.
NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK
Strategies for Keeping Children Safe

"Children Act Fast . . . So Do Poisons!" is the theme of National Poison Prevention Week, March 17 to 23, 2002. Because small children, particularly those under the age of five, are constantly exploring their surroundings and are prone to put many of the things they find into their mouths, they are at great risk for unintentional poisonings.

Many of these unintentional poisonings occur when adults are distracted for just a few moments by everyday occurrences, such as the doorbell, the phone or another event in the household. Chemicals and medicines must be safely stored away at all times.

Although unintentional ingestion of most cleaning products isn’t fatal, precautions with these products should be taken. Cleaning products should be stored in a locked cabinet away from food and out of the reach of children. They should be kept in their original containers with their product labels intact. Should an accident occur, it’s essential to know what to do in order to give proper treatment.

A few products, such as some oven or drain cleaners, can be toxic, thus they are packaged in child-resistant containers. However, accidents can still occur if the container isn’t properly closed. Even adults should use these products with care; and avoid using them when small children are around.

About half the accidents involving children occur when products are being used. Schedule routine cleaning when there’s a lull in activities, such as nap time or when children aren’t in the room. Even with this routine, put the product away immediately after removing the amount needed for the cleaning job at hand.

Never mix cleaning products. Some products are safe when used alone, but may become dangerous when mixed with other products. Chlorine bleach or any product that contains chlorine bleach, including some tub and tile cleaners, mildew removers, all-purpose cleaners and automatic dishwashing detergents, should never be mixed with ammonia or products that include ammonia compounds (e.g., some window cleaners, hand dishwashing detergents, or acidic products, such as toilet bowl cleaners or rust removers). Dangerous gases can be released. Rinse measuring cups after each use to avoid accidentally mixing products.

Even "empty" containers can pose hazards. Be sure the product is entirely used up. Replace the cap securely to protect children, pets and garbage handlers. Check the label for any special disposal instructions. Discard in a trash can or recycling bin (if applicable) that has a secured lid.

Small amounts of liquid, even if it’s a non-toxic substance like water, can be hazardous. Toddlers are “top heavy,” which means that if they topple into a bucket, it may not tip over. As a result, they can drown in a few inches of water. Standard cleaning buckets and pails with water in them can be dangerous. Other potential drowning hazards include toilet bowls and bathtubs, as well as containers with drinking water for animals, with a soaking solution for soiled clothes or with wall paper stripper. Five-gallon industrial containers, such as those used to package lawn care or home maintenance products, are often brought home for household use. They are even more dangerous than buckets and pails because they are very sturdy and don’t tip over easily.

Never leave cloth diapers soaking in an area that’s accessible to toddlers. If using a diaper pail, rinse the diapers in the toilet, and then put them in the pail without adding water. Use a deodorizing tablet to help minimize odors. Then launder as soon as possible.

Unintended poisoning typically occurs in the home between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., when activity is at a peak and household members are tired and distracted. Child-care providers must also be on the alert. Pre-school and day-care teachers and staff must be sure that no cleaning products or chemicals are within sight or reach of children. This is a particular challenge because germ control is an important issue in these settings and there are several especially busy periods during the day. These include lunch and snack time, as well as when children are arriving at and departing from the center. The staff should be trained in proper handling, use, storage and safety procedures for products used on the premises.

The Soap and Detergent Association is participating in National Poison Prevention Week. For more information on this event, and to learn more about the new 24-hour nationwide, toll-free number for poison centers, visit: www.poisonprevention.org.
SPRING CLEANING
Tips for Household Textiles

Draperies, bedspreads, comforters, upholstery and slipcovers are all part of the spring cleaning agenda. These items can collect dust and dirt, as well as suffer fading and discoloration that can damage their fibers and diminish their looks, observes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Comforters and quilts collect varying degrees of grime. In kids’ rooms, where they are sprawled over and flopped on, the need for cleaning is obvious. But, even in seldom-used areas, such as guest rooms, dust and direct sunlight can take their toll. Some of these bed coverings can be laundered at home. Check the care labels. Others, particularly large comforters, may require the services of a professional dry cleaner, either because they’re dry-clean-only or because they won’t fit into a home washer and dryer for proper cleaning.

Most draperies can be dry cleaned. Check the care label as some draperies with reflective backings require laundering. The average life of draperies is three years for unlined ones, five years for lined ones. These time frames will vary with fabric types, dyes and sun exposure. Cleaning should be done at least once a year to prevent soil build-up and discoloration. In between cleanings, vacuum regularly to remove surface dust and grime.

Blankets, comforters and mattress pads should be cleaned at least four times a year. Pretreat heavily-soiled areas with a prewash product. Set the washing machine on high water level, delicate agitation and normal spin. Add detergent and partially fill the washer with warm water. Stop the washer. Then put in the comforter or blanket, pushing it down to submerge. Turn the washer back on, finish filling it with water and complete the wash cycle. To prevent clumping during the tumble dry process, add a few dry, clean towels.

Fabric refresher are an option for hard-to-wash fabrics, such as carpets (after vacuuming), upholstery and curtains. Read and follow the product label directions. Spray evenly on the fabric until it’s slightly damp. As the fabric dries, odors will fade away.

Wrinkle-releasing sprays are particularly useful for window treatments that may be difficult to iron. After reading the product label directions, spray in a sweeping motion until the item is slightly damp. Tug and smooth away the wrinkles.

MISCELLANY

Asthma Facts
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 17 million people in the U.S. have asthma. Symptoms for both allergy and asthma victims range from misery to downright dangerous. Just going through an average day can put a sufferer in contact with many triggers.

Fortunately, there are lifestyle strategies and cleaning practices that can help get allergies and asthma under control. Some of them can be adopted immediately, while others require a long-term commitment.

The Soap and Detergent Association has developed an asthma awareness program to educate people about the role of cleaning to control allergies and asthma. “Cleaning to Control Allergies and Asthma” is a colorful, 28-page booklet that features cleaning strategies for controlling allergens in the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living areas. It’s available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. “Clean and Healthy...Strategies for Today’s Homes: Allergies and Asthma” is an educational presentation kit for healthcare providers and educators. It includes a 36-page reference manual, talking points and reproducible sheets. Individual copies of the booklet or a single copy of the presentation kit are available free of charge. To order, visit The Soap and Detergent Association’s web site, www.cleaning101.com or fax Nancy Bock at: (202) 347-0445.
Wash Away Those Allergens
Laundering is a simple and effective way to remove most allergens from bedding, says The Soap and Detergent Association.

Proof comes via a study conducted by a group at the University of Sydney in Australia. The three-part study first compared results using water alone, soap and detergent with enzymes, and detergent without enzymes. Four water temperatures ranging from 47° F to 92° F and three laundering times — 5, 20 and 60 minutes — were used.

The second part of the study examined allergen extraction by 11 common brands of detergent at 57° F and 36° F for five minutes. The third part of the study compared four detergents containing enzymes. Detergents alone were found to extract the most allergens, even in wash temperatures as low as 57° F and within a time frame of five minutes. When it comes to allergy and asthma relief, the washing machine is an important ally.

Mix-at-Home Cleaning Recipes
Recipes for mix-at-home cleaning products may seem like an attractive "back to basics" idea, but it's one that poses some special challenges and concerns, cautions The Soap and Detergent Association.

Some common kitchen chemicals can irritate eyes and skin. Some may be caustic and harmful if accidentally ingested. Before utilizing any mix-at-home recipe, be sure to confirm the following information for each ingredient: emergency treatment guidelines, safety precautions for mixing with other products and complete directions for use. A commercial cleaning product already includes this information on the label. For individual ingredients, it may be necessary to check directly with the manufacturer.

Mix-at-home cleaning products should be stored in clean, new containers. Empty cleaning product bottles may have product residue that could cause a chemical reaction. In addition, old labels on the container could cause confusion in an emergency situation. Food containers are also dangerous for storing mix-at-home products. The contents could easily be mistaken as edible by young children, the elderly or anyone with impaired vision.

Q & A
SDA Answers Your Questions

Q: My son is starting little league baseball this season, what's the proper way to clean his baseball caps?
A: The preferred method of care is to hand wash the cap with a laundry detergent, rinse and air dry. Another option may be machine washing on a gentle cycle; however, this tends to be rough on the brim of the hat. The brim usually contains cardboard that can bend, distort or even tear from the agitation of the machine. The plastic adjustable hooks on the back of the cap may also pose a problem, as they tend to melt at higher drying temperatures. Some designers have replaced these plastic hooks with a metal sliding hook that doesn't melt during washing or drying.

Always test the cap for colorfastness by applying a small amount of detergent and water on an inconspicuous area and blot with a white cloth. If any traces of dye appear on the cloth, it may not be safe to clean the cap.

Q: My family seems to always get stains on their clothes during the spring holiday season. What's the best way to remove these stains?
A: Follow these tips for removing common Easter and Passover stains.

Egg: Pretreat or soak stain using a prewash stain remover. Soak for at least 30 minutes or several hours for aged stains. Then launder.

Easter Egg Dye: Pretreat stain with a prewash stain remover as soon as possible. Then launder, using a laundry detergent and a bleach that is safe for the fabric. Keep in mind, some dyes may be permanent.

Chocolate: Pretreat stain with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Then launder in the hottest water and bleach that are safe for the fabric.

Wine: Sponge or soak stain in cool water. Pretreat with a prewash stain remover, liquid laundry detergent, liquid detergent booster or paste of granular laundry product and water. Launder using a bleach that's safe for the fabric.

Juice: Wash with laundry detergent and a bleach that's safe for the fabric.
CLEANLINESS FACTS

"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

Tips for Controlling Clutter
Decluttering is the first step to good cleaning and reducing allergens. Here are some helpful tips.

1. Allow enough time to get organized.
   Average times are three-to-six hours per closet or one-and-a-half days per room.

2. Sort the mail daily.
   Set aside 10-to-15 minutes daily to sort mail and take action on necessary items. Sort mail over a trash can or recycle bin, eliminating as much as possible. Decrease junk mail by requesting that your name be removed from mailing lists.

3. Toss old paperwork.
   Go through old piles and throw out expired coupons, warranties and service contracts, outdated schedules, invalid insurance policies, old grocery receipts, recipes and clippings you haven't used in five years or more. Remove and file special magazine and newspaper articles. Then, toss newspapers older than a week and magazines older than three months.

4. Create a filing system for everything.
   Eliminate piles by filing everything, no matter what its stage of completion and keep a to-do list for items that need action.

5. Keep a limited supply of bags, containers and jars.
   Keeping a few of these items on hand is useful, but many people accumulate 10-to-20 times what they need. Limit yourself to a realistic quantity: six-to-12 plastic containers and glass jars, about 12 paper bags and 24 plastic bags — let the rest go.

6. Save only important memorabilia.
   To get the most pleasure from what you save, keep only what's truly important. Buy each family member a "treasure chest" for memorabilia — a large plastic tub that fits under a bed or on the closet floor or garage shelf. They can add or delete items, allowing the container size to limit how much they keep.

For more information, visit: www.cleaning101.com