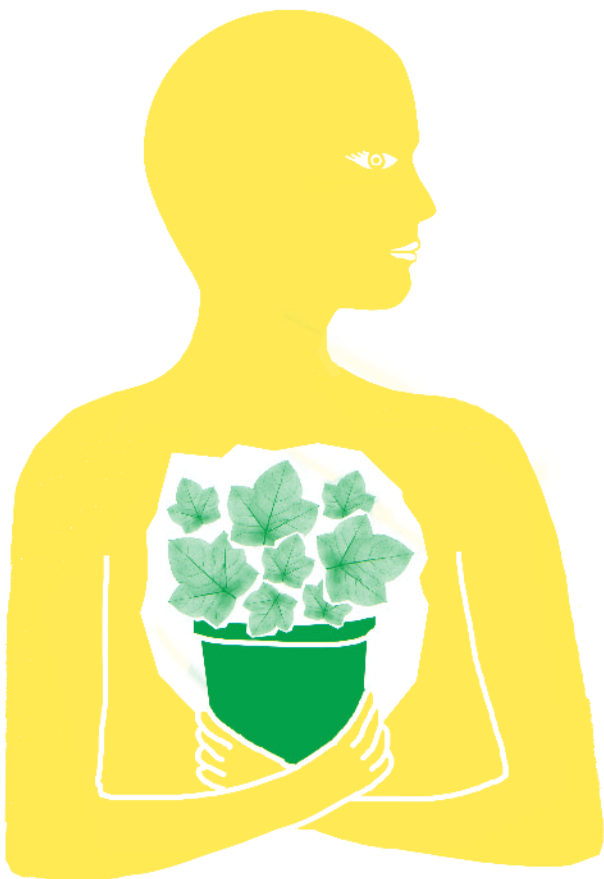


Promoting Health
in Everyday Environments

WOMEN'S BREATHING HEALTH



Millions of people in North America have allergies, and many others (about 8% of adults and 12% of children) have asthma.¹ **Many factors influence the development of asthma and allergies.**



In this brochure, we consider several aspects of air quality that relate to asthma and allergies but which **don't always get attention**. We highlight what can be done at home to help prevent allergic reactions and asthmatic attacks. This pamphlet also contains a list of resources for further information.

PLANTS CAN IMPROVE INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Indoor potted plants are not only pretty: some can also filter pollution out of the air and improve indoor air quality.

Aloe and Spider plants

can help absorb formaldehyde.² This chemical may be found in new pressed wood products (e.g., bookcases or shelves).

Ivy and Cycas

(Sago Plum) plants absorb benzene, a chemical which can be found in tobacco smoke and traffic exhausts.³

Usually, only low doses of chemicals are released in a home. But even at very low levels, they can sometimes cause asthmatic attacks.

Using plants to clear the air can bring benefits without harm.

FRESH AIR, AIR FRESHENERS, AND AIR QUALITY

Commonly-sold **synthetic (chemical) air fresheners** come in a range of formats and smells to attract buyers. But all of them add pollution to the air and can cause allergic reactions. Some plug-in air fresheners release formaldehyde into the air.

It's possible to keep a home smelling good and to freshen the air without synthetic air fresheners:

Open a window every day for air exchange – even in winter (for short times)

Light – and then blow out – a match to help remove bathroom odours

Simmer apple cider and cinnamon on the stove to sweeten up the smell of a home





INDOOR MOULD AND TENANT'S RIGHTS

Mould anywhere indoors – basements, storage rooms, bathrooms, and kitchens – **can be hazardous to the lungs and harmful to breathing**; it can also set off allergic reactions and asthma symptoms. Mould spores come into a home through air from the outside; the spores can then grow where there is consistent humidity.

Although tenants can clean small patches of mould, this is only a temporary solution. The only permanent way to remove mould is to control or eliminate the excessive humidity that causes it to grow.

Landlords are responsible for preventing and resolving mould problems in a dwelling and they should be informed by tenants about mould as soon as some is detected.

If a landlord refuses to fix the problem, the local rental board should be contacted.

Tenants should make sure that health issues associated with mould (e.g., sneezing, wheezing, allergy symptoms, asthmatic attacks) are documented by a health professional.



AVAILABLE RESOURCES ON ALLERGIES AND ASTHMA

* **Allergy/Asthma Information Association**

www.aaia.ca

*Brochure about dust,
pet and mould allergies:*

www.aaia.ca/en/dust_brochure_en.pdf

Asthma fact sheet brochure:

www.aaia.ca/en/asthma_the_facts.pdf

* **Allergies and Asthma: The Canadian Lung Association**

[www.lung.ca/diseases-maladies/asthma-asthme/
allergies-allergies/index_e.php](http://www.lung.ca/diseases-maladies/asthma-asthme/allergies-allergies/index_e.php)

* **The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment**

www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca

ENDNOTES

- 1 Allergy/Asthma Information Association, Canada, www.aaia.ca.
- 2 Wolverson BC, McDonald RC & Watkins EA, Jr. 1984. Foliage Plants for Removing Indoor Air Pollutants from Energy-Efficient Homes, *Economic Botany*. 38(2): 224-228.
- 3 United States Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html.

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