INDOOR ALLERGY WEEK 2011
THE RISE OF ‘HOME FEVER’

November 2011

The national charity for allergies, food intolerance and chemical sensitivity

In association with:
With over 21 million adult sufferers in the UK, allergy affects one in three people.

The effect that allergy has on people's lives is frequently underestimated and attention is all too often focussed on hay fever, yet other 'year round' allergies have a significant impact.

This report centres on the prevalence of indoor allergies, conditions which, we as a charity have seen rise greatly in a short space of time.

An out of season hay fever, dubbed as 'home fever', (Perennial Allergic Rhinitis) by Allergy UK is on the increase.

The home is a sanctuary, somewhere we can escape to, but for so many it is actually the trigger of an allergy. House dust mite, mould, pets and even cleaning products can cause a reaction amongst sufferers.

This report outlines the results of an Allergy UK survey carried out among over 1600 allergy sufferers.

The research has shown us that there are a great deal of sufferers out there. Allergy UK estimates there are at least 12 million people allergic to their own home.

To prevent this figure from rising, Allergy UK believes more people need to understand what causes indoor allergies and recognise symptoms.

Allergy UK would like to thank Sealy beds and Filtrete Air Purifiers for supporting Indoor Allergy Week 2011.
Indoor Allergy Week - 14-20 November 2011
‘Home fever’ is the new hay fever

The research carried out by Allergy UK has shown that more and more people are suffering from indoor allergies.

In February 2010, the charity found that house dust mites were a trigger of an allergic reaction for around 45% of allergy sufferers. Fast forward 18 months and that figure has risen to 58%.

We asked allergy sufferers what their condition was triggered by:

The incidence of house dust mite allergy is apparent, but all indoor allergies have risen in the last 18 months.

In February 2010, 23% of sufferers cited they were allergy to mould, this figure is now at 31%.
The research revealed that the most common symptoms of an indoor allergy or 'home fever' are a runny nose and sneezing.

People all too often confuse allergy symptoms with a common cold or flu and therefore, don’t treat the root cause of the problem.

The most common symptoms of an indoor allergy are:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runny nose</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itchy Eyes</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheezing</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Itchy Skin</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watery Eyes</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbed Sleep</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rash</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Concentration</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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“I wake up sneezing and wheezing every morning”

Allergy UK survey respondent, November 2011
‘Home fever’ is a year round condition with the majority of indoor allergy sufferers citing that they suffer throughout all seasons.

But when the colder months arrive, closing doors and windows and turning the heating up creates a breeding ground for house dust mites and mould.

50% of those allergic to mould say their condition worsens in the winter months.

The research asked “Is your indoor allergy worse during the winter months?”:
When asked which room in the house are symptoms worse, the respondents replied:

59% of indoor allergy sufferers said their symptoms are worse in the bedroom.

Not surprising, when you consider the average bed harbours two million house dust mites and the average pillow doubles in weight over a period of six months due to dust mite faeces.

With allergy sufferers saying their symptoms are worse in the bedroom, particular effort needs to be concentrated in this room to prevent the rise of the house dust mite.
Allergy UK’s research revealed that 16% of allergy sufferers wash bed linen every three weeks or less, which is two weeks longer than the charity recommends.

To ensure that the house dust mite allergen is effectively denatured, and that the mites are kept to a minimum, the charity recommends washing bedding at 60 degrees on a weekly basis.

Yet 58% of allergy sufferers are washing bedding at 30 or 40 degrees, meaning that house dust mites are there to stay.

**Allergy sufferers are washing bedding at the following temperatures:**

- 30 degrees: 38.8%
- 40 degrees: 46.7%
- 60 degrees: 10.6%
- 90 degrees: 4.2%
Mattresses are the main culprits for harbouring house dust mites.

Up to two million of the microscopic creatures are found in the average bed.

Allergy UK recommends changing your mattress every eight to ten years advice which the majority of allergy sufferers abide by.

But worryingly 13% who have had their current mattress for 11 years or more, and 3% have kept theirs for 20 years plus.
When it comes to resting your head, pillows are something the research showed we just don't like letting go of.

Allergy UK suggests replacing pillows on an annual basis. Yet a quarter of allergy sufferers admit they only change theirs every five years or more.

When asked how often people replace their pillows, the survey revealed:
While there is no ‘cure’ for ‘home fever’, Lindsey McManus from Allergy UK recommends these top tips to manage symptoms and reduce the amount of indoor allergens in the home:

- Dust regularly but use a damp duster first, then a dry cloth. Otherwise, you are just moving the dust around. You should ideally be wiping all surfaces each week including window sills and tops of cupboards.
- Buy products that have been tested to ensure they prevent the escape of the house dust mite allergen. Look for the Allergy UK Seal of Approval™
- Use allergen-proof barrier covers on all mattresses, duvets and pillows. These should be breathable and should completely enclose the item.
- Wash all bedding that is not encased in barrier cover (e.g. sheets, blankets) every week. Washing at 60 degrees or above will help eliminate house dust mites. House dust mite allergen dissolves in water so washing at lower temperatures will wash the allergen away temporarily, but the mites will survive and produce more allergen after a while.
- If possible remove all carpeting in the bedroom, vacuum all surfaces of upholstered furniture at least twice a week.
- Change your mattress every 8-10 years and replace pillows every year.
- Remove all carpeting from concrete floors. Concrete floors trap moisture allowing dust mites and mould spores to thrive. Seal the floor with a vapour barrier, and then cover it with a washable surface such as vinyl or linoleum.
- Where carpets cannot be removed, vacuum regularly with a high-filtration vacuum cleaner with filters capable of retaining a high proportion of the smallest particles (HEPA filter, S-class filter or similar). Details of suitable vacuum cleaners are available from Allergy UK (visit: www.allergyuk.org).
- Use a high-temperature steam-cleaner to rid carpets of dust mites.
- Use light washable cotton curtains, and wash them frequently. Reduce unnecessary soft furnishings.
- Washable stuffed toys should be washed as frequently and at the same temperature as bedding. Alternatively, if the toy cannot be washed at 60 degrees place it in a plastic bag in the freezer for at least 12 hours once a month and then wash at the recommended temperature.
- Reduce humidity by increasing ventilation. Use trickle-vents in double-glazing, or open windows. Use extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens.
- If necessary, use a dehumidifier to keep indoor humidity under 50% (but over 30%), plus an air purifier will trap large airborne allergens such as pollen, house dust mite debris and mould spores that pass through the filter.

If you think you might be suffering from an indoor allergy, call Allergy UK’s helpline to speak to a trained allergy advisor or visit www.allergyuk.org.
This report was produced by Allergy UK, November 2011.

Allergy UK is the operational name of the British Allergy Foundation; the leading national medical charity providing advice, information and support to people with allergies, food intolerance and chemical sensitivity. Allergy UK acts as the 'voice' of allergy sufferers, representing the views and needs of those affected by this multi organ disease.

Allergy UK Helpline

01322 619898

(9am to 5pm Monday to Friday)

www.allergyuk.org

In association with: