

Avoid allergy flare-ups this holiday season

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(HealthDay)—Doctors are warning about the threat of COVID-19 transmission as cold weather forces people indoors. But indoor allergies could also take the joy out of your holiday season, an expert says.

Dust, mold, pets, furniture and houseplants can cause indoor allergies, said Dr. David Corry. He's a professor of medicine in the section of immunology, [allergy](#) and rheumatology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"Dust provides shelter for things that cause allergies, like mites and fungi, which are major components of [dust](#) themselves," he said in a college news release.

Corry suggests the following tips to reduce the risk of flare-ups due to indoor allergies:

- **Monitor humidity levels.** Keeping your home dry—at less than 50% humidity—could reduce the growth of mold and dust mites. Try a dehumidifier if the humidity is greater than 50%.
- **Control dust.** Regularly vacuum and clean surfaces. Don't neglect to clean areas where your pets live. Consider using a HEPA filter in rooms where you spend most of your time.
- **Avoid crumbs.** Try to limit eating to certain locations of your home to prevent stray food remnants from promoting mold growth.
- **Seal any cracks.** Make sure your home is sealed properly so that bugs, dirt and humidity can't get in.
- **Consider removing carpeting.** Carpets tend to trap allergens, molds and dust mites. If you have carpeting or throw rugs, vacuum regularly to prevent buildup of dust and dander.
- **Change your bedding regularly.** Cover your pillows and mattresses in allergen-proof covers. Avoid cloth furniture if possible. Change HVAC filters regularly.

Holiday decorations can also trigger allergies because they often collect dust during storage. Keep decorations in tightly sealed bags that are stored in a cool, dry place, Corry recommended.

When you take out your [holiday decorations](#), do so outdoors to limit your exposure to dust that can accumulate on them, he said.

"Also keep in mind that live trees used as holiday decorations and certain [holiday](#) plants can be extremely allergenic," Corry said. "If you struggle with allergies, consider plastic alternatives."

More information: The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology offers advice on [mold allergy](#).

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