

American Lung Association Health House Program and 3M Continue National Check Your Filter Days Campaign

Pledge to Improve the Air in Your Home

More than 159 million Americans - 55 percent of the U.S. population - are living in areas where they are exposed to unhealthy levels of particle pollution or ozone outdoors (1). Of perhaps even greater concern, however, is that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that indoor pollution levels may be two to five times higher - and occasionally up to 100 times higher - than outdoor levels (2).

Fortunately, there are many steps homeowners can take to have cleaner air in their homes during the fall months and throughout the year. With this in mind, the American Lung Association Health House program and 3M - the makers of Filtrete filters - have created the National Check Your Filter Days campaign.

The public can participate in this initiative by visiting www.healthhouse.org and making a pledge to replace their existing furnace filter during the beginning of each season with a new filter that meets the American Lung Association Health House program air quality guidelines. Everyone who makes the pledge will automatically be entered into a sweepstakes to win a trip for two to Honolulu, Hawaii - one of America's cities with the least air pollution, according to the American Lung Association State of the Air: 2004 report.

Those who pledge will receive a free copy of Improve the Air You Breathe: A Homeowner's Guide to Better Indoor Air Quality from the American Lung Association Health House program. This workbook offers simple, practical tips and provides added peace of mind for Americans looking to do their part in creating a cleaner living environment for their families. People who make the pledge can sign up to receive a quarterly reminder e-mail to check their filters, courtesy of the makers of Filtrete filters.

"Indoor air pollution is a major health concern for all Americans - especially for the 46 million in this country who live with allergies and asthma," said Dr. Ian Greaves, American Lung Association Health House Program. "Using furnace filters that meet American Lung Association Health House indoor air quality guidelines and replacing them according to manufacturer's instructions will help reduce levels of pollen, pet dander, smoke and other particles that can trigger or exacerbate allergy and asthma attacks and other potentially serious health problems."

To help you provide a healthier home for your family, here are some tips from Improving Indoor Air Quality: A Guide For Homeowners to help you have cleaner air at home:

Prohibit smoking indoors. Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, 200 of which are known poisons, and more than 69 known cancer-causing agents. The only way to eliminate the hazards of tobacco smoke is to not allow smoking indoors.

When getting your home ready for the new season, think about things you can discard. Purchase only the amount of household chemicals you really need and get rid of any old, stored products you have not used in the last two years. Old containers of paint, stains, solvents, pesticides, glues and other household chemicals pose multiple health risks in your home.

If your home uses replaceable filters, look for the highest-efficiency filter that works with your furnace. The American Lung Association Health House program recommends using filters that meet its indoor air quality guidelines and have a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 10 or higher. One such filter is the Filtrete ultra allergen filter from 3M which captures more pet dander, dust, smoke and mold spores from the air that passes through the filter than fiberglass filters.

If you have forced air heating in your home, turn your fan to the "on" position so that air is continuously passing through the filter, even when the furnace is not being used.

Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 40-50 percent relative humidity to prevent mold growth. Run exhaust fans more frequently in high-moisture areas, such as kitchens and bathrooms, to help prevent mold and reduce excessive indoor humidity.

Clean and dry up water and plumbing leaks in the home within 24 hours to prevent mold growth. Make sure all windows, vents and other openings into your home are well-caulked, both inside and out. Caulking is a simple, inexpensive step any homeowner can take to prevent moisture from leaking into the home. Replace wool or feather-stuffed bedding materials with synthetic materials that can stand up to machine washing. Also, cover mattresses, pillowcases and box springs with dust mite-resistant casings to keep the sleeper from inhaling mite allergens.

Editors Note: For a downloadable high-resolution image of the Improve the Air You Breathe: A Homeowner's Guide to Better Indoor Air Quality booklet cover, log on

to: http://www.hunterpr.com/newsroom/photo_ALAguidecover.html

For a downloadable high-resolution image of the For the Air You Breathe Journal from Filtrete filters, log on

to: http://www.hunterpr.com/newsroom/photo_Filtretejournalcover.html

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The American Lung Association has been fighting lung disease for 100 years through programs of education, advocacy and research and has long been a leader in the clean air movement. The American Lung Association Health House program, a national education program, is raising the standard for healthier indoor environments through its national demonstration homes, training programs for consumers and builders and educational partnerships and alliances. For more information about the Health House program, call 1-877-521-1491 or visit www.healthhouse.org. For more information about the American Lung Association's other programs and services, visit www.lungusa.org. 3M provides support to the American Lung Association Health House program for its ongoing efforts to generate awareness and educate people about indoor air quality issues. The American Lung Association and its Health House program do not endorse products.

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Figures cited are from the American Lung Association State of the Air: 2004 report. These Americans are at risk for decreased lung function, respiratory infection, hospitalization for asthma, damage to the lungs and increased risk of premature death (1).

Yet according to a 2002 survey commissioned by the American Lung Association Health House program and 3M, less than 20

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