

ask the designer



Creating a healthy home environment

Question: I have two children who both suffer from allergies and asthma, so I am interested in creating a cleaner and healthier environment—and one that supports the trend toward “greener” home environments.

Answer: If there are children or adults in the home with allergies, the most important place to start implementing changes will be the bedrooms. Most allergies are triggered by dust mites that are ever-present in mattresses, bed linens and pillows. In addition, carpeting, throw rugs and draperies tend to collect dust, which is irritating to a person prone to allergies. A good place to start would be to vacuum the mattress and box spring, as well as the pillows. Once this is done, you should purchase a hypo-allergenic mattress cover and pillow cases to put a barrier between the bottom sheet and the mattress. This shields one from coming in contact with or to contributing human particles (via sweating and skin shedding) to the mattress.

Replace the draperies or hanging window treatment with roller shades. While the look of draperies can really add to the ambiance of a room, to a person with allergies, this change could make a world of difference. It would be beneficial to replace carpeting with either bamboo wood floors or recycled flooring such as Marmoleum (made from renewable natural ingredients), or carpeting made by the Mohawk Group, which specializes in hypo-allergenic carpeting and flooring.

Since you will be changing bedding, flooring and window treatments, a fresh coat of paint with low VOC (volatile organic compound) by Benjamin Moore or Sherwin Williams can give the room a fresh new look.

By introducing some of the changes mentioned here, you not only will create a healthier and “greener” environment, but also will change the look and feel of the room.

The approach used for the bedrooms also can be applied to other rooms in the home, such as the kitchen, family room or den. In the kitchen, you might replace existing countertops with renewable types of countertops (Silestone, recyclable glass tile and poured surfaces) that offer microbacterial protection. Additionally if kitchen renovation is an option, consider cabinetry and flooring made from river-recovered woods, low-emitting lighting fixtures, and energy-efficient appliances and fixtures. These energy conservation strategies will create a healthier and greener environment. ☺

— Jacqueline Germany, allied member, ASID

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