

Asthma symptoms triggered by bacteria in dust

New research is helping scientists to better understand the relationship between house dust and asthma, reports the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association (CCSPA).

The CCSPA says studies supported by the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences show bacteria lurking in household dust produce chemicals that may trigger asthma and asthma-related symptoms, such as wheezing.

Known as endotoxins, the chemicals exist in the cell walls of bacteria. When bacteria rupture or disintegrate, the chemicals released can cause inflammation of the airways.

Shannon Coombs, CCSPA's Executive Director, says "although dust samples from kitchen and living room floors had higher levels of these chemicals than those collected from bedrooms, the study found the health impact was greater in the bedroom where factors such as duration and timing of the exposure come into play."

The following activities can help control the amount of dust in the bedroom:

- Wash sheets weekly.
- Use special dust mite-proof covers, sometimes called "allergy impermeable" covers, on pillows and mattresses. If you don't use covers, wash pillows at least four times a year, and replace them every year.
- Use smooth blinds or washable curtains. Wipe blinds weekly with a clean, damp cloth. Wash curtains monthly.
- Don't use carpet in the bedroom. Use linoleum, vinyl or wood flooring and washable area rugs. Wash rugs once a week.
- Dust furniture weekly, using a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust.
- Vacuum and wet mop floors weekly.

For more information about cleaning and health, check out the CCSPA's website at www.healthycleaning101.org.