



Every home is different; it is impossible to generalize on the subject of whether to have your home air ducts professionally cleaned because someone in the household suffers from allergies to dust and mold. *No studies have ever determined that duct cleaning has improved anyone's health or that "dusty" ducts circulate the dust back into the home.* The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) DOES NOT recommend professional air duct cleaning except under special circumstances. They do recommend, in the case of fuel burning furnaces, that they should be inspected yearly for threats of carbon monoxide poisoning and also possibly, in general, to improve heating function.

It's normal for air ducts to gather dust while they function in circulating air; usually this dust can be self-cleaned by vacuuming the registers. If you **look into the ducts** and **don't see or smell visible signs of mold growth** or large amounts of dust, then **cleaning the ducts won't help relieve your allergy symptoms**. As a rule of thumb, **if:** 1) there is visible heavy mold growth on the inside sheet metal surface of the ducts or other parts of the cleaning system, or 2) the ducts are infested with rodents, insects or their droppings, or 3) ducts are clogged with excessive dust and these particles are being released into the air, then there is a good chance the ducts should be cleaned professionally. **Note:** ask to see any "hidden" mold an inspector may say is in the system. Some growths really aren't mold. **To alleviate and help reduce allergy symptoms, prevention is the best action.**

PREVENT DIRT FROM ENTERING THE SYSTEM

- Get the best, most efficient air filter you can find and use it in the system, changing it and cleaning it frequently
- Check that you have all necessary filters on your unit and that these are not clogged
- Each year during system maintenance, ask that cooling coils and drain pans be thoroughly cleaned
- If you're doing any indoor building or renovations, don't use the system during the process and cover air ducts and registers with plastic so construction dirt won't enter your system
- Dust and vacuum your home regularly and frequently

PREVENT MOISTURE AND MOLD FROM ENTERING THE SYSTEM

- Fix any water leaks
- Remove any standing water and correct it by making sure drain pans slope toward the drain
- Some older systems still use flexible hoses and these can either rot and leak or clog and leak so have those hoses inspected and replaced if necessary
- If the unit has a built-in humidifier, follow the manufacturer's direction to maintain it properly
- If any fiberglass or other insulation materials get wet or smell moldy, seek and repair the water source and then replace the insulation
- Don't use steam cleaning or any other moisture system to maintain your duct work
- Some manufacturers recommend adding a cup of bleach into the "hose" system seasonally to prevent mold growth – read your maintenance directions and follow them

BE A SAVVY CONSUMER IF YOU DO DECIDE TO HAVE YOUR DUCTS CLEANED PROFESSIONALLY

- Learn all you can about air duct cleaning – a good source <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/airduct.html>
- If you think indoor air quality is making your allergy symptoms worse, first check other sources for indoor air pollution. Ask AAFA-TX for more information on this topic
- Ask the contractor to 1) show his license – Texas and several other states require one 2) show you any mold or biological contamination they say exists – is it really mold? 3) supply and then check references
- Get at least 3 contractor estimates
- Find out what your ducts are made of – sheet metal, flex duct, or fiberglass duct board or a combination since each type requires a different type of cleaning
- Don't allow the use of Biocides unless there is proven mold growth: be certain they will be applied strictly according to label directions. Generally, you and your pets should leave the house if this is being done
- Generally, sealants shouldn't be applied
- Adopt a regular maintenance plan to service your system yearly, change or clean filters regularly and check for leaks to prevent moisture contamination and use bleach if safe for your system

AAFA-TX

Ft. Worth, TX 76123

817-297-3132 * 888-933-2232

info@aafatexas.org * www.aafatexas.org

