



AIR PURIFIERS – DO THEY HELP RELIEVE YOUR ASTHMA OR ALLERGIES?

Chronic sneezing, sniffing or wheezing from allergies or asthma may cause many to consider purchasing either a home filtration system or a room air purifier. The question is, do these expensive products actually help relieve your symptoms? Most physician specialists might suggest **other, more efficient and less expensive steps to relieve your symptoms before considering this purchase:**

1) Eliminate your exposure to allergens in your home: replace carpeting with wood or tile flooring; if you have furry or feathered pets, try to find them a new home – if that's not an option, keep them outdoors, or at least keep them out of the bedrooms and off the bed and other furniture; wash bedding in as hot water as possible to kill dust mites; use bedding encasements to provide a barrier between you and dust mites; let the bed "cool" before making it – helps to kill mites; vacuum the mattress occasionally, as well as sofas & chairs – they harbor dust mites too; select furnishing that don't collect dust; limit knick-knacks and other items that tend to collect dust; don't allow kids to sleep with stuffed animals unless they're the washable type; clean drip pans under the fridge of mold and roach droppings; eliminate roaches by covering drains and garbage cans; if you do find roaches, clean the area where you found them - it's the feces or droppings that is the allergen; destroy mold in bathrooms, under sinks, around AC hoses; sweep frequently with a HEPA filter vacuum.

2) Keep indoor air as free of allergens as possible: use air conditioning rather than opening windows in pollen season– this helps keep outdoor pollens and allergens out; clean AC filters every month; when your allergies are active, stay indoors as much as possible and keep windows in homes and cars closed; most people with airborne allergens feel better with the AC running rather than using fans; don't allow anyone to smoke indoors; purchase special AC filters that are resistant to allergens; minimize use of scented candles, incense and wood-burning fireplaces; don't use scented household cleaning products, especially aerosols, room sprays; avoid perfumes, scented beauty products including deodorants, shampoos and especially those in aerosol containers – use pump applicators instead; keep solvents, paints, fertilizers or pesticides in ventilated areas away from the house.

3) Keep your home ventilated: use outdoor exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathrooms to draw out strong cooking odors or moisture from bathrooms and avoid mold build-up; make certain your dryer is properly vented and there are no leaks from the washer which adds to mold growth; use a humidifier in winter and a dehumidifier in summer to keep the indoor humidity level adjusted, for most people, between **30 and 50% relative humidity**, and don't forget to clean the unit at least once a week to avoid mold growth in the machine.

4) Follow the medication plan made between you and your physician: have a written action plan; use a peak flow meter to anticipate problems; use both your control and your emergency medications. If the medication plan isn't working for you, speak to your doctor and develop a plan that **will work** for you.

If you still want to purchase an air purifier or filtration system after taking these corrective measures, **select one that works**. Don't rely on a manufacturer's website or marketing materials. Check with independent testing agencies such as Consumer Reports, The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, which rates air cleaners according to their Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR), for efficiency ratings. **Things to consider in evaluating a system** include: the substances the cleaner will remove from the air in your home; how large a space it is designed to clean; the efficiency rating in relation to the true HEPA standard; the CADR; how difficult and expensive it is to clean the filters; how noisy is the unit? Generally, physicians and testing services agree the most efficient and beneficial system is a HEPA system. Also, to work properly, the room space needs the door closed and the unit should run 24 hours a day with windows closed and with the air conditioning running.

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