

ASTHMA & ALLERGY ALER T

A Publication of Asthma & Allergy Affiliates of the North Shore

James A MacLean MD
Jeanne E. Gose MD, PhD
Andrew I. Ober, MD
Cristina Palumbo MD
Eyal Oren, MD

Highland Medical Park
114R Highland Ave.
Salem, MA 01970
(978) 745-3711

Hunt Medical Building
80 Lindall Street
Danvers, MA 01923
(978) 777-0970

Willow Professional Park
865 Turnpike ST.
N. Andover, MA 01845
(978) 683-6256

Hidden Dangers for Asthmatics

Sometimes, what we can't see can hurt us. And that is especially true for asthmatics!

We have been warning patients about the dangers of the Ionic Breeze air purifiers. These products do



little to clear allergens from the air. However, they do a very good job of producing ozone in the home! The ozone gives off the 'crisp and clean' smell. However, it is also

one of the major components in 'bad air' that can exacerbate asthma. These ozone levels in the home can approach those found in Los Angeles on dangerous smog days. The preferred air purifying system is one with a HEPA filter.

Air Fresheners

Recently, laundry detergents and air fresheners were put to the test. Most manufacturers of these products do not list any of their ingredients. A researcher from the University of Washington studied the chemicals in these products. Among the chemicals that were released into the air by these products were acetone (the active ingredient in paint thinner), acetaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane. There were over 100 volatile organic compounds emitted from the six products tested. Of most concern, five of the six

tested products contained carcinogenic, hazardous air pollutants considered by the Environmental Protection Agency to have NO safe exposure level.

Products such as Febreze, when added to the dryer can cause added problems. These chemicals can cause an asthmatic exacerbation when clothes are removed from the dryer and the aerosolized chemicals are inhaled at high levels.

A larger study of 25 cleaners, personal care products,



air fresheners and laundry products found that many of these contained similar chemicals. For instance, a plug-in air freshener contained more than 20 different volatile organic compounds. Of these, seven are regulated as toxic or hazardous under federal laws. The product label lists no ingredients.

Two national surveys published by in 2004 and 2005 found that about 20 percent of the population reported adverse health effects from air fresheners, and about 10 percent complained of adverse effects from laundry products vented to the outdoors.

Among asthmatics such complaints were roughly twice as common.