

Preparing Homes for Winter: Improving Air Quality

As winter approaches, many of us prepare to spend more time indoors, seeking warmth and comfort. For individuals with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS), however, indoor air quality becomes a critical concern during this season. Various chemicals found in everyday products can trigger symptoms in people with MCS, and can make winter especially challenging. From cleaning products to heating systems, many common household items release pollutants that can trigger symptoms like headaches, respiratory issues, and fatigue in those with MCS. Here's how to prepare your home for winter with a focus on maintaining clean air that's safe and healthy.

Choose Natural Cleaning Products

Winter often brings a desire to clean and cozy up indoors, but conventional cleaning supplies can introduce harsh chemicals and fragrances. For those with MCS, opt for natural cleaning solutions that are fragrance-free and non-toxic. You can easily create effective cleaners with simple ingredients like baking soda, and vinegar. Not only are they healthier for your indoor air, but they're also better for the environment.

Monitor and Improve Ventilation

In colder months, homes are usually sealed up to retain heat, which can trap pollutants indoors. Regularly ventilating your space, even if just by cracking a window for a few minutes daily, can help circulate fresh air and reduce indoor pollution. Consider installing a ventilation system with an air purifier that includes a HEPA filter to reduce allergens, dust, and other particles in the air.



Maintain Your Heating Systems

Your heating system is a major component of your winter indoor environment. Unchecked systems can circulate dust, mold, and other pollutants that affect air quality. Before winter arrives, schedule a maintenance check for your heating system. Clean or replace filters regularly to ensure that they're capturing as many particulates as possible.

Use Fragrance-Free and Chemical-Free Air Fresheners

Air fresheners and scented candles are popular for adding a cozy touch in winter, but they're often packed with harmful chemicals. A great option is using a small air purifier to keep your indoor air smelling fresh without introducing new chemicals.

Keep Humidity Levels Balanced

Winter air can be dry, which may cause irritation, especially for people with MCS. However, too much humidity can encourage mold growth, which can worsen air quality. Aim to maintain indoor humidity levels between 30-50% by using a humidifier or dehumidifier as needed. This balanced humidity can help improve respiratory comfort and keep indoor air healthier overall.

Regularly Dust and Vacuum

Dust can carry allergens and even small particles of chemicals that settle on surfaces. Frequent dusting and vacuuming can help reduce these pollutants. For those with MCS, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter is essential, as it captures fine particles that could otherwise be stirred up into the air. Microfiber cloths are also helpful for dusting, as they trap dust rather than spreading it around - remember to rinse the cloth often.



Final Thoughts

Preparing your home for winter is not only about keeping it warm but also about ensuring it's a safe, comfortable environment for everyone – especially those with MCS. By taking small steps to improve indoor air quality, you can create a space where you and your loved ones can breathe easy and enjoy the season without unnecessary irritants. A cleaner, healthier home truly makes winter cozier for everyone!