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Hypoallergenic Dorm Room Wish List

by Lisa Sullivan, M.D.

Because high indoor allergen counts have been linked to the development of allergies and asthma, here is a wish list for allergy and asthma patients going off to prep school or college. Parents and students should keep receipts for products purchased, because they qualify for medically necessary items for tax or health savings account purposes.

- **Air-conditioned room with windows closed** This keeps pollen and molds out and maintains a desirable humidity. Students may ask their allergist or primary care provider for a letter of medical necessity.
- **Wood, laminated or tile flooring** Remove or request a carpet-free room. Carpeting greatly increases dust mite concentration and can trap other allergens such as mold, pollen, roach particles, pet dander and foods.
- **HEPA-grade or equivalent vacuum cleaner** If stuck with carpet, buy a HEPA-equivalent vacuum. These cleaners remove allergens that typically flow right through conventional

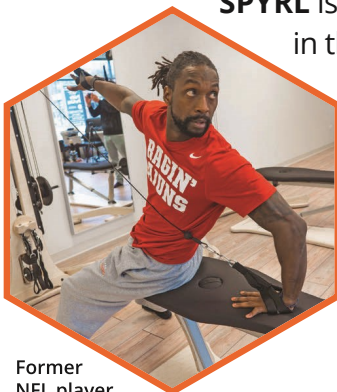
bags. Remember that allergen particles are smaller than dirt. An economical version (\$80) can be found at area drug stores or online.

- **Allergen-proof bedding** Keep in mind that dust mites love anything that is rarely washed. Minimize the “fluff”. Less is more on a bed. The new, sleek and modern look works well. Pick up dust mite encasings for the mattress and pillow. They can be found at local bed/bath stores or online. Washable blankets or comforters are best. Avoid duvets and wash linens weekly.
- **Humidity control** Buy an inexpensive humidity detector (\$10) at a local hardware/drug store or online and put it in the dorm room. Keep the humidity between 35 and 45 percent to minimize mold and dust mite growth. If the humidity is too high in the summer, turn on the air conditioner, and if too low in the winter, add a vaporizer.
- **HEPA air purifier** Buy an inexpensive HEPA filter (such as the Germ Guardian 3-in-1 system, about \$100) at a local hardware/drug store or online and run it in the dorm room overnight.
- **Medication management** Keep daily medications near the toothbrush so not to forget to take an allergy or asthma regimen. Always carry a rescue inhaler or Epi Pen/AuviQ if needed.
- **Use caution in new situations** At parties, or if tempted, don't try new substances. People with allergies and asthma are more prone to adverse reactions.
- **No smoking** Kindly ask that friends refrain from smoking in the room and car.

Lisa Sullivan, M.D., of Highland Park, specializes in treating pediatric and adult allergy, asthma and immunology. For more information, call 847-541-4878 or visit LisaSullivanMD.com. See ad on page 37.

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