

Air cleaning products can benefit the family

Dr. M. Eric Gershwin, nationally-respected allergist, author and Professor of Medicine at the University of California, discusses the potential benefits - and the differences - in air cleaning products now on the market.

Question: Who benefits most from a home air cleaning system?

Dr. Gershwin: Both children and adults with allergies, as well as anyone who lives in a home with a smoker. Also, anyone who suffers from bronchitis, emphysema or asthma.

Question: How are allergies and asthma different?

Dr. Gershwin: Allergy is a state of hypersensitivity to a particular food or medication or, more commonly, an air-borne material such as pollen, dust or mold. Many cases of asthma are caused or made worse by this sensitivity.

Asthma is a specific condition in which the bronchial tubes contract. The collapse of these air tubes leads to the shortness of breath.

Question: So, it is true that an air cleaner would only help people with allergies to airborne irritants like pollen, dust and mold?

Dr. Gershwin: Not at all. The wheezing asthmatics suffer is definitely aggravated and increased by pollution, dust and smoke. A good air cleaning system will remove all of these irritants.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT KIND

Question: How do you determine which air cleaner is best?

Dr. Gershwin: Look for one that removes pollen, mold spores, dust, pet dander and other household pollutants without requiring expensive installation or a lot of maintenance.

The type we recommend in our practice is a passive electrostatic type manufactured by Newtron Products Company of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Question: Are there any other key differences between electronic and electrostatic?

Dr. Gershwin: From a health standpoint, electronic filters pose a special problem for everyone, particularly those with respiratory allergies. While electronic filters remove some of the pollutants, they actually generate another very undesirable pollutant. Ozone.

Question: Isn't there ozone in our atmosphere anyway?

Dr. Gershwin: Yes, in small amounts. Even in small quantities, it can decrease lung capacity and be very irritating for the lung. Anything that produces ozone is not recommended for home use.

Question: How much help can an air cleaner provide if a person only has it at home?

Dr. Gershwin: Allergies are worst at night. In a home without an air cleaner, the heater or air conditioner is continually stirring up dust and pollutants that cause the sneezing and coughing. The best answer is to install a passive electrostatic filter in the heating and air conditioning system and leave the fan on 24 hours a day. This provides the best relief.

Question: What about fiberglass filters?

Dr. Gershwin: Fiberglass filters are standard in most residential heating systems. As air flows through them, they filter out particles such as dust. They need replacement at least monthly. They do not really help allergy victims, because they don't eliminate allergens like pollen.

MORE ADVICE

Question: Is there any other advice you can give those of us who sneeze through the spring and fall?

Dr. Gershwin: Don't smoke, it constricts the bronchial passages

and makes any allergy worse. Keep your windows closed at night, pollen is worst between midnight and 6 a.m. Think more about embarking on a program of preventive medicine. It is far more effective to prevent a wheeze than to treat a wheeze.

Dr. Gershwin is Chief, Division of Rheumatology/Allergy and Clinical Immunology at the University of California, and the author of two books on allergy.

Bathroom area needs caulking

The one area inside a house most commonly in need of caulking is around the bathtub or wash basin. Every time the tub or basin is filled with water, it settles a little. This causes a minor separation of the tub or basin from the wall. Splashed water can then work between the tub or basin and the wall, starting the process of rot.

For bathroom projects, a small handheld tube of tub and tile caulking is usually sufficient.

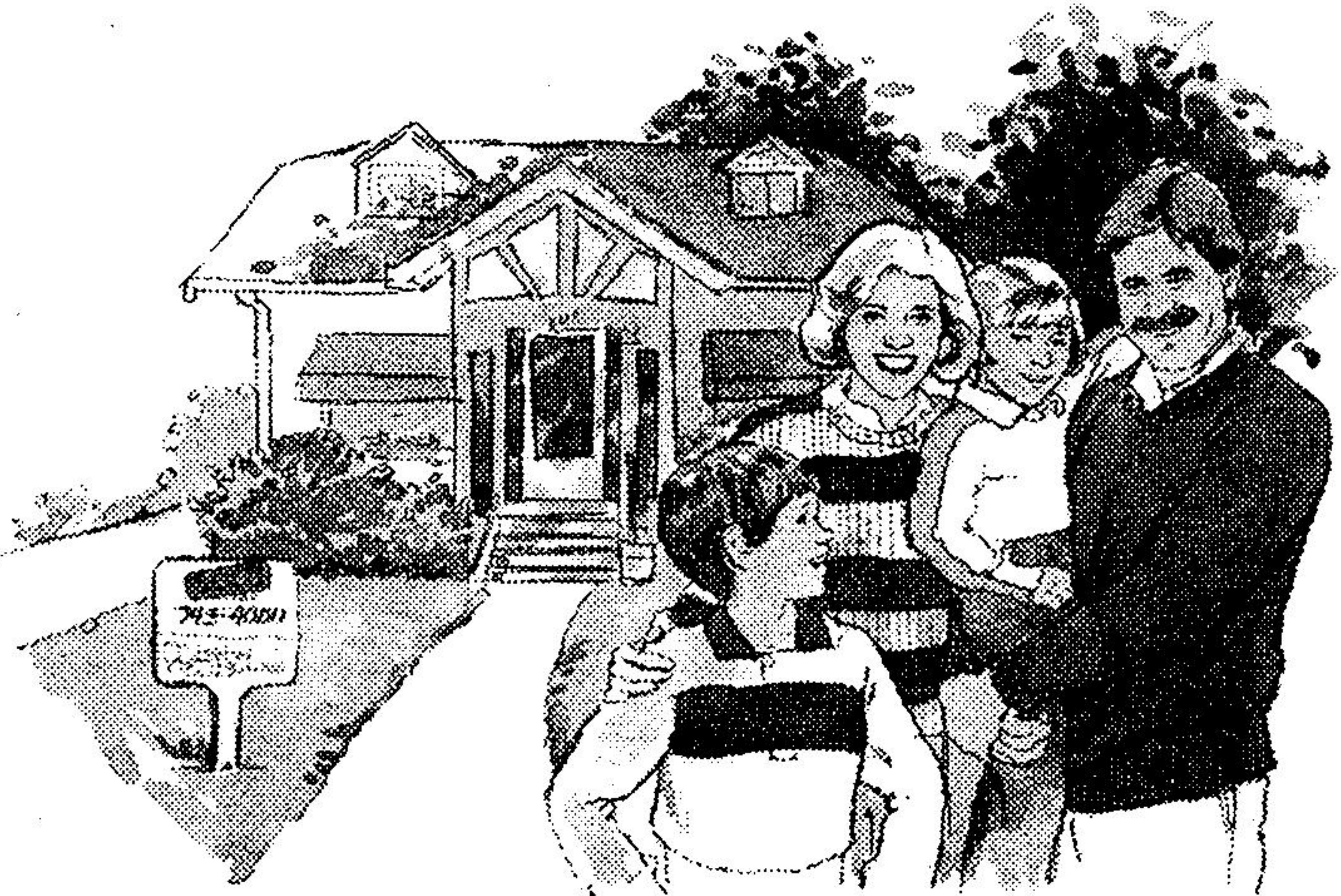
To replace caulking, clean out the old caulking with a screwdriver or putty knife, being careful not to scratch the tub, basin or surrounding wall tile. Cut the top of the nozzle for a moderate-size bead (or remove the cap, if so equipped) and, when the area is completely dry, push the sealant around the edge in one continuous line.

Once the caulk is in place, you can wet your finger to smooth out the caulk.

It is very important that all areas to be caulked be free of any soap and grease deposits or dirt. If not, the caulk won't properly adhere.

When caulking a tub, it's a good idea to fill it with water so the caulk can penetrate the gap between the tub and wall.

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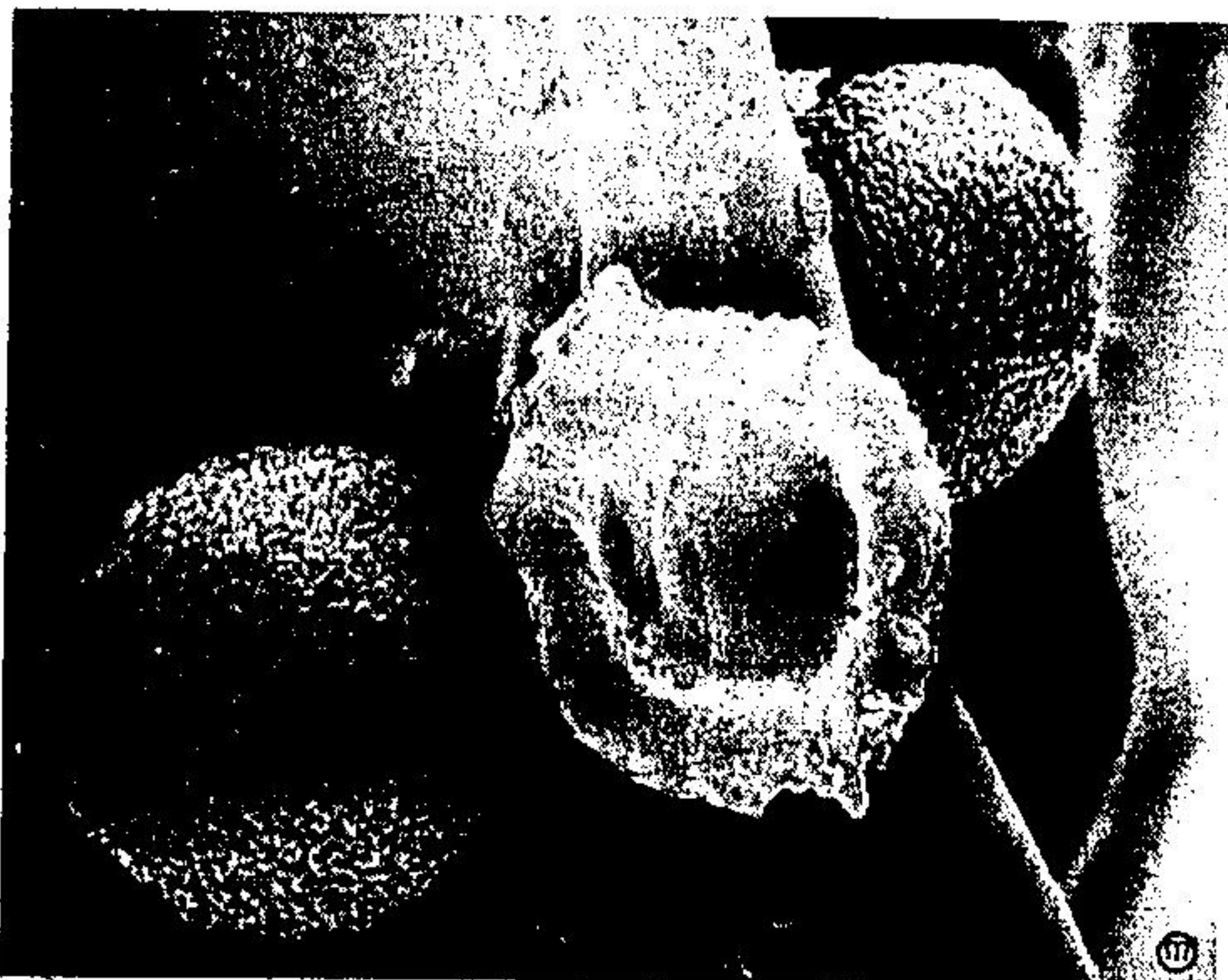


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WHEN YOU SNEEZE in the spring, summer or fall, it's probably caused by pollen, shown here magnified 500 times by an electron microscope after it's been "captured" by a Newtron Air Cleaner. Most tree pollen, like this one from a hemlock tree, ranges in size from 24-50 microns (1/10,000 to 3/1000 of an inch).



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