Air pollution and contaminants can be found in abundance throughout our homes in products and materials that we are in contact with every day. Poor air quality can be caused by household chemicals, by biological pollutants such as mould, mildew, and dust mites, and by off-gassing from building materials and HVAC systems. Advancements in home construction have also created dwellings that are more airtight than ever before which seal in harmful pollutants. The potential health implications can be serious.

Health Canada indicates that incidences of asthma have increased fourfold in the past 15 years. Furthermore, 52 per cent of those households linked poor indoor air quality as a direct cause. Yet, even as the issue's prevalence grows, homeowners can take some preventative measures and precautions to safeguard their health and improve indoor air quality, as follows:

• Store varnishes, paint, and solvents outside of the home. Opt for a storage area with good ventilation to deter the effects of off-

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gassing. Paints, varnishes and solvents can emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that are potentially harmful to human health and the environment.

- Prevent and remove all household mould. Ensure there is adequate ventilation in rooms prone to water vapour, namely the washroom. Likewise, fix leaks in pipes, walls or floors or on the roof. Invest in a dehumidifier to control humidity levels in your home. Mould and mildew are known contributors to allergies and asthma.
- Invest in an air purifier. Our homes routinely harbour pet dander, dust, dust mites and other allergens, as well as harmful VOCs. An effective solution to improve indoor air is to use a high-quality air purifier with an electrostatic precipitator, like the Oreck ProShield. This type of air purifier, featuring an advancement called Truman Cell technology, will also capture and destroy allergens and dust, as well as larger particles like hair and lint. Look for a unit with an 'oxygenator' stage that converts ozone to oxygen for cleaner air.
- Introduce house plants into your home. Some plants can be very effective at improving air quality and even removing harmful VOCs like benzene and formaldehyde.



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