

# Fall HOME IMPROVEMENT

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## Feeling Crabby?

It might be something in the air

Susan always wondered why her husband, who was usually outgoing and friendly, got quiet and withdrawn when they visited her parents. It was getting to the point that holiday visits to her family weren't fun anymore.

When she finally asked him, it turned out there was nothing wrong between him and her parents; it was their cats. They made him so allergic that he didn't feel like his usual talkative self.

Few people recognize it, but poor indoor air quality can be an unsuspected cause of mood changes that put a strain on relationships, according to some allergists and family counselors.

"If you don't know you're allergic to something, or if you don't know there are particulates in the air that are creating some sort of bad feeling, then you can become depressed from allergies, and you may start taking it out on everyone around you," explains a Colorado Springs psychotherapist.

"You can become lethargic, tired, cranky and not even make the connection that it is the poor air quality that is causing the problem," she says.

Professionals who are concerned with the psychological effects of indoor air pollution say the problem is greater today, because people are spending more time in closed environments where pollutants can build up and the general level of stress in society is getting higher.

The best way to reduce the stress is to reduce the causes. Among the steps that are frequently recommended are:

- Don't allow smoking, or restrict smoking to a limited, well-ventilated area.
- Keep pets off of furniture where guests may sit, and never allow them in guest



Poor indoor air quality can cause mental stress in addition to allergies and other breathing problems.

bedrooms. Pet dander can linger for as long as a year on furniture or bedding.

- Maintain adequate ventilation. One study found allergens were 200 percent higher in a tightly closed, superinsulated home than in a house with an adequate rate of ventilation. Many homes now have whole-house fresh-air exchangers that guarantee adequate fresh air at all times. A fresh-air exchanger also saves energy, because it warms the incoming air in the winter and cools it in the summer.
- Have a high-efficiency, whole-house air cleaner installed on your central heating and cooling system to remove irritating particulates from the air throughout the house.

## Did you know ...

A tool kit is a must for every house, regardless of whether the occupants are experienced do-it-yourselfers or can barely tell a screwdriver from a butter knife.

With a basic toolbox, a minor problem can be taken care of before it turns into a major catastrophe. The following is a list of tools that should be part of every household's tool kit.

- A good hammer.
- A retractable tape measure.
- One small and one medium-size screwdriver.
- An adjustable wrench.

- A toilet plunger.
- A power drill, along with a complete set of bits.
- An inexpensive pair of wire cutters.
- A utility knife with a razor-sharp blade.
- A roll of electrical tape and a roll of masking tape.
- A pair of pliers.
- Packages of nails and screws in all shapes and sizes.
- A pair of work gloves.
- A package of bandages, gauze pads and ointment, in case of minor cuts and scratches.

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