

# Indoor air quality: What you can't see can hurt you

(BPT) - The Environmental Protection Agency has named indoor air quality as one of the top five environmental risks to public health citing research that indoor air may be up to 100 times more polluted than the air outside. With Americans spending 90 percent of their time indoors, purifying indoor air is paramount to keeping families healthy - especially those with family members suffering from asthma and allergies.

"Poor indoor air quality has been linked to a host of health issues such as headaches, dry eyes, nasal congestion, nausea, fatigue, heart disease and chronic respiratory disease," says Chris Chase, product marketing manager at Aprilaire. "For individuals that suffer

from asthma or allergies, air particles such as pollen, dust and dust mites are known triggers for asthma attacks and allergic reactions."

More than 25 million Americans have been diagnosed with asthma and 50 million suffer from allergies. Dust alone is comprised of dead insects, dust mites, mold spores, pollen, dander, skin flakes and other particulates that can be harmful to health. Controlling indoor air quality can provide relief for asthma and allergy sufferers and protect your family from getting sick. You can improve indoor air quality with two simple steps:

- Prevent irritants from entering the house. Take measures to make sure dust, dirt and other pollutants are prevented from entering the

house. Simple activities like removing shoes before entering the household, closing windows during high pollen days and not allowing smoking indoors help keep dirt and other irritants from entering the household.

- Install a whole-home air purification system. A whole-home air purification system is installed as part of the central heating and cooling system to capture and eliminate airborne contaminants. Whole-home air purification systems remove up to 98 percent of airborne contaminants down to one micron in size and are 40 times more efficient than a standard furnace filter. Each time the air system runs, the whole-home air purification system removes dust, dust mites, pet dander, mold



spores, pollen, viruses, fungi, mold and other dangerous substances from the air throughout the entire home, rather than just the air in the

immediate vicinity like a portable air cleaner.

Other important considerations include maintaining humidity levels as well as

proper ventilation; especially if your home is newer or has been recently updated with tighter materials for more energy efficiency.

# Five simple steps to a more stylish outdoor living space

(BPT) - It's not too late in the season to create your dream deck - or to give your existing outdoor living space a fresh new look. Design a backyard retreat that's ideal for entertaining family and friends as the weather grows more temperate with a few tips from the experts.

1. Make the most of your space. Think about the types of activities you'll enjoy on your deck and use fashionable, weather-resistant furnishings to establish spots for socializing, dining or simply relaxing. Create a cozy conversation nook underneath a pergola or trellis by facing sofas together or bringing in comfy club chairs accompanied by upholstered ottomans.

"If you have a pool, set up a spa-like area with chaise lounges and side tables on which to place refreshments," says Vanessa De Vargas, designer and one of the faces of Trex's Engineered Artistry campaign. "For backyard barbecues or evening cocktail parties, add food and drink stations and portable bars or

servicing carts."

2. Choose materials that offer long-lasting good looks. High-performance, wood-alternative decking like Trex combines enduring beauty and durability thanks to its signature protective shell. Resistant to fading, staining, scratching and mold growth - even after several years of spills, splashes and other outdoor entertaining mishaps - Trex requires only an occasional soap and water cleaning. No sanding, staining or painting necessary.

"When creating an outdoor living space that's a natural extension of your home and your style, it's important to start with materials that offer both hassle-free maintenance and incredible design flexibility," says De Vargas. "Today's composite decking boasts high-definition wood grain patterns and a full palette of rich, saturated colors inspired by nature."

3. Accent with color. Adding "pops" of color is one of the easiest - and most cost-efficient - ways to spruce up a new or existing outdoor living space. Small items like multi-

hued pillows, blankets, candleholders and glassware can all make a big visual impact. According to De Vargas, brightly-colored accessories look especially appealing when contrasted with outdoor furnishings in natural or cream shades. These fun pieces may be switched out each year as color trends evolve - allowing you to constantly refresh the

look of your deck.

4. Frame it up. The railing is a sure way to upgrade any deck from drab to fab - adding style, as well as safety and support. For instance, with its sleek and unobtrusive appearance, Trex Reveal Aluminum Railing maximizes scenic views by spanning long lengths for panoramic sightlines. Enhance the beauty of your railing and

set the mood for alfresco dinners with LED dimmable deck lighting that will extend the time you can spend outdoors.

5. Create a focal point. If you want to add some drama to your deck, consider incorporating an element like a fireplace, fire pit - or even a large screen television - that will capture attention and serve as a natural spot for guests to

gather.

"Fountains and waterfalls not only look appealing, but they create a very soothing atmosphere that draws people in for relaxation," says De Vargas. "Sculptural pieces in copper, metal and different textures also catch the eye and turn your outdoor living space into a work of art."

Dave Hockenberry

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