

Report 102: The Health Hazards in *House Dust*
What's more common than dust?
Is it '*just*' dust or toxic stuff!

Dust is so *ultra* common that people often ignore it, regarding it as more *unsightly* than *unhealthful*. It accumulates on floors, furniture, drapes, end tables, bookshelves, pictures, knickknacks, air conditioning intake and exit vents ... on everything. *How threatening is it? How does it get indoors?* It rides on air currents and on our clothing. We bring in an estimated 35% on our shoes. And, it has been directly associated with...

- . Cancer
- . Asthma
- . Pneumonia
- . Bronchitis
- . Skin rashes
- . Sinus infections
- . Allergies
- . Eye infections.
- . Throat irritations
- . Learning disabilities

What Scientific Tests Reveal.

Tests show that *dust* commonly contains *cadmium, chromium, nickel, arsenic, lead, asbestos,* and, in some instances, *mercury*. All, save *lead*, are known carcinogens. Yet, *lead*, in even small quantities, can impact every organ in the body, drop IQ as much as 15%.

We used *lead* in gasoline and *asbestos* in brake shoes for decades. Ultra fine particles of both are found in the outdoor dust that comes indoors to accumulate, increasing health threats for lack of proper cleaning.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon compounds called PAHs are also present in *dust-toxic* substances produced as fallout in the burning of petroleum products, tobacco, and wood. Many PAHs are carcinogenic. They're present in used motor oil, soot from vehicle emissions, and asphalt residue--all ingredients in *dust*.

This health report was provided by:

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Where Are the Greatest Threats from PAHs?

As PAHs are *unburned substances from combustion* (vehicle emissions) their greatest threats exist in areas of high vehicular traffic. For example, the more traffic, the more soot in the air--a substance that poses a dual threat to health.

First, *soot* is carcinogenic. Second, it's a form of carbon--a substance often used as a filter, because of its propensity to *collect*. Thus, *soot* has a strong tendency to collect both pesticides and PAHs. The combination of these contaminants binds *lead*. Therefore, increased *soot*, from increased vehicular traffic, compounds the threats of all these contaminants.

Pesticides in Dust

What may surprise you is that *pesticides, heavy metals, and PAHs* are usually found in far greater concentrations *indoors* than out. Reasons: Lack of degradation and continuous accumulation for lack of proper cleaning. (According to the EP A, Americans spend no more than 1/2 of 1% of their income on home cleaning.)

Biological Contaminants

Dust contains living biological contaminants: *dust mites, viruses, bacteria, mold and fungus spores, . . . and an inexhaustible* food supply to perpetuate *proliferation--pet and human skin cells, insect body fragments, dust mite excrement, and pollen*.

And, it is especially dangerous to children, having underdeveloped immune systems and living closer to the floor. In fact, children can consume through inhalation and ingestion--as much as 10 grams of dust per day as they run, jump, and wallow in dirty environments, put their hands in their mouths and handle foodstuffs with unwashed hands.

Scientific analysis of indoor dust usually reveals the presence of pesticides as well. *DDT* and *chlordane*, which have been banned for years, along with other pesticides specified for "*outside use only*" are also found *indoors*.

Become Dust Conscious

1) Keep exposed surfaces dust free. Never use a feather duster to stir the dust into the air to be inhaled. Use a damp cloth to collect it carefully. 2) Mop hard surface floors twice weekly. 3) vacuum carpet 2-3 times per week.