Tips for Saving Your Energy While Cleaning With COPD

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

Cleaning Chores and COPD

For many patients with COPD, cleaning is the last chore they want to be doing, but it's an important chore to keep on top of. So, how do we keep on top of it and why should we bother?

Mold, Dust and Other COPD Household Triggers

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of cleaning, we must understand why it is necessary.

Many COPD patients have allergies, and it's important to create an environment where allergens are kept to a minimum. There is not a whole lot we can do with our outside environment, but there is much we can do on the inside, and it all starts with cleaning.

As you continue along the path of your COPD journey, you will become more in tune with what your body reacts to. Knowing these triggers can play an important part in how you organize your home environment. For example, if dust inside your home can cause a flare-up in your symptoms then regular cleaning is a must.

Mould, mildew, dust, pollens and perfumes can all have a dramatic effect on a patient's breathlessness. So identifying your risk factors are important for you to keep your disease stable.

Not taking due care with the cleanliness of your house can have other effects which can cause you to have flare-ups. A home with germs and bacteria is a house ready to make you sick. As patients we know it doesn't take much for a common cold to end up as chest infection and this can often mean a hospital admission.

My Cleaning Experience

For the last 27 years, I have run a cleaning business and I am well versed in what works and what doesn't in relation to a COPD patient. I have had the opportunity to carry out work in the homes of fellow respiratory patients and listened first-hand to their main causes for concerns.

1. **The smell of cleaning products and whether they are able to be used around respiratory patients.** When I first started in the cleaning business there wasn't much available in the way of chemicals suitable for use around people with allergies. Nowadays there are many products to choose from.
2. **Having carpets cleaned.** Many patients were concerned the cleaning would take too long to dry causing the carpet to have a musty odor about them. My advice to patients then and now is to clean carpets in either spring or autumn as these were times of year in our country where carpets would dry quickly.
3. **Should they be in the house while the cleaning work was being carried out?** Many times we recommended patients to plan an outing on the same day as cleaning was to take place. This way they could leave before the job was started and could return after the work had been carried out, thus avoiding the risk of any reaction to chemicals.

Speaking as a COPD patient who is also in the cleaning industry I can attest to the importance of regular cleaning of your house to minimize the risk of a flare-up.

Cleaning Tips to Keep in Mind

Creating a cleaning roster for your home is a great way to keep on top of the dust and grime which can build up.

When you are creating this roster it's important to factor in whether you are doing the cleaning, you're employing the help of others or a combination of both. Cleaning rosters are a way to ensure your home is given a regular clean as well as knowing what areas have been cleaned by whom and when.

This can be especially useful in the case where you're receiving outside help. Some chores need to be carried out more than others and some people find it easy to keep on top of cleaning chores if there is a schedule of when the work is to be done.

Your cleaning roster should include the regular chores such as vacuuming, mopping and dusting but there are other items which are overlooked sometimes even though they are very important. Filters on certain appliances need regular maintenance so they operate effectively and don't become part of the problem.

Air purifiers, air conditioning systems, water filters, vacuum cleaner filters can all cause a build-up of germs and bacteria unless properly maintained. Make sure curtains are regularly vacuumed and washed as they can be dust magnets and contribute to a patient having a COPD flare-up.

If you're receiving outside help with cleaning in your home, you should involve your helper with the scheduling of chores. Chores which involve dusting or vacuuming are best left to someone else as these chores are likely to set off your symptoms very quickly.

After you have made a list of chores, identify the best ones for you to do and then allocate the rest to your helper.

Plan to Succeed and Not to Fail

Like anything we take on in life, it is important to have a plan which you can see through. Be mindful of what you can and can't do and be realistic in your goals. If you can only do one chore per day, then accept this. If you are able to do this, then you will accomplish a lot in a week.

Don't stress if you aren't feeling your best. Sometimes pushing yourself to do chores when you're not feeling well will be counterproductive, especially if by doing this you become ill. A house which is regularly cleaned will not turn to ruin just because you skip a day or two due to not feeling your best.

Purchasing the right cleaning products is vital as you do not want to be using products which you'll react to. Nowadays there are companies who manufacture cleaning products which are safe to use around people with allergies. In our own business, we offer odorless products for customers who are reactive to chemical and perfume smells.

While it may take a little organization to keep your house clean the benefits will be worth the effort. A clean house will limit your risk to having a flare-up and with COPD it's vital to limit your risk.