

Time for Spring Cleaning!

*Breathe
easy*
at home program

Dear BEAH Partner,

Spring is here again! It's a good time to remind everyone of some seasonal and year round asthma-related responsibilities that the "Housing Code" places upon us. Don't get fooled. April first is right around the corner so, you be the jester this year and don't get caught off guard!

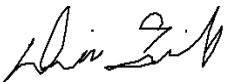
Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarms- While you're working on your clever prank, landlords should use April Fools' Day and Halloween as reminders to change the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. These important safety devices are required year round. Even electrically hard-wired alarms need batteries, which should be changed every six months.

Heating Season- The annual heating season does not end until June 15th. The good news is that the temperature "shall at no time exceed 78°F (25° C) during the heating season".

Natural/ Mechanical ventilation- To make it easier to breathe, codes require that each habitable room, and rooms containing a toilet, bathtub or shower, have ventilation to the outdoors consisting of mechanical ventilation capable of exhausting air to the minimum requirements or windows, skylights, doors or transoms in the exterior walls or roofs that can be easily opened to a minimum of 4% (the opening) of the floor area or .

I hope that you find these reminders a little bit humorous and a whole lot helpful. Please feel free to visit our web page (www.cityofboston.gov/isd/housing) for a more detailed summary of the "Housing Code" (State Sanitary Code) or for a copy of the actual document.

Sincerely,



Dion Irish
Assistant
Commissioner
City of Boston,
Inspectional Services Department

Special points of interest:

- *Asthma-related spring cleaning codes from the Inspectional Services Dept.*
- *A Breathe Easy-At Home success story*
- *Meet Amanda LaSane, the new BEAH Coordinator*

Providers, home foreclosures are affecting both tenants and home-owners. Have you asked your patient if they are affected by foreclosure? Here is a list of useful resources:

Homeowners: Boston Home Ctr. 617-635-HOME (4663)

Renters: Boston Rental Resource Center.

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/rentalhousing>

ISD inspections are a great resource to address neglected housing conditions due to foreclosure activity!

For an inspection, call 617-635-5300 M-F 9am-5pm and 617-635-4500 during off-hours. They can also be requested electronically via www.cityofboston.gov/isd/



A BEAH Success Story

I was following a young, single mother with a 2 year-old child, who had been hospitalized for asthma. The mother was doing everything she could to control asthma triggers in her home, but the apartment had mice. She had reported the mouse problem to the property manager multiple times, but felt that her complaints were not being taken seriously. The property manager sent out someone from maintenance who filled some holes. The mother reported the most mouse activity at the stove but the maintenance person did not move the stove. I called the same manager to explain that the child had asthma and that mice were a serious health concern. The situation wasn't resolved.

Mom and I discussed BEAH and she requested that I make a referral after she saw a mouse run over her sleeping son. The housing inspector came out and pointed out the evidence of a mouse infestation to the property manager. He told her that she needed to bring in a professional pest control company, who would fill in all the holes and exterminate properly. The inspector also identified two other code violations within the apartment. The inspector gave the manager one month to complete the work. He came back and all the violations had been corrected. After months of struggling with the property manager to exterminate, the mother was thrilled.

-Susan Sommer, MSN, RNC

Community Asthma Nurse Coordinator at Children's Hospital Boston

Breathe Easy-At Home Tips Corner

Spring cleaning can be an important part of a healthy home. But, it is important to do spring cleaning in ways that are safe and do not make your asthma or your child's asthma worse.

DO:

- Use wet mopping or Swifter on smooth floors. Dry sweeping raises dust.
- Vacuum on carpets. If possible, use a vacuum with a dirt finder.
- Avoid cleaning the house when the asthmatic is home. Stirring up a lot of dust can be a trigger.
- Organize clothes and toys in clear plastic trash bags or bins to reduce dust and pests.
- Wash stuffed animals in hot water and dry them. They can be a source of dust.

DON'T:

- Use chlorine bleaches. Try non-chlorinated bleaches diluted in water.
- Use carpet powders and cleaners with a lot of fragrances.

- Mix cleaning products, especially ones with ammonia. This can be dangerous.
- Leave cleaners out where kids can reach them. Keep them up high or locked in a cabinet.

Cheap healthy suggestions:

- For scrubbing a kitchen or bathroom, *baking soda and water* are effective and safe.
- For cleaning up counters and windows, use *white vinegar in water*.
- For cleaning silver, use *tooth-paste*.
- For furniture polish, mix *olive oil and white vinegar*.
- For stains, try *borax, shaving cream or hydrogen peroxide*.

Megan Sandel, MD

Pediatrician at Boston Medical Center and Asst. Professor of Pediatrics at Boston University School of Medicine

"Spring makes everything young again- but man."
-Jean Paul Richter

Welcome Amanda LaSane, our new full-time Breathe Easy At-Home Coordinator! Amanda describes herself as a hardworking, enthusiastic young woman from Dorchester.

Amanda started her position on March 18, 2008. The BEAH phone number will continue as 617-534-2485. You can email Amanda at ALaSane@bphc.org.

Thank you to Vandna Mittal, who has acted as our part-time BEAH Coordinator for almost one year. Vandna will be receiving her MPH from Boston University School of Public Health in May 2008. Thank you, Vandna!

