



## **National Center for Healthy Housing**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Simple Steps Can Reduce Asthma & Its Symptoms National Center for Healthy Housing Releases Asthma Study on World Asthma Day**

COLUMBIA, MD -- With allergy season upon us most families are focused on avoiding outdoor asthma triggers such as pollen. Yet, numerous studies indicate that indoor irritants and allergens, such as tobacco smoke, dust mite and cockroach antigens, play a significant role in the development of asthma as well as the increase in disease severity.

The National Center for Healthy Housing released today – World Asthma Day – a study that tested steps families can take to reduce asthma symptoms. The research team, which included the Phoenix Children’s Hospital, the City of Phoenix, and the National Center for Healthy Housing spent 36 months with 67 Phoenix, AZ families to help them apply the steps in their homes. A vast majority – 96% -- reported significant improvements to their children’s health.

“Asthma is one of the leading causes of disease among children in the United States. But there are practical measures that families can take to protect their children,” said Rebecca Morley, NCHH Executive Director.

Cecile Fowler, Housing Rehabilitation Manager for the City of Phoenix’s Neighborhood Services Department which participated in the study, said, “Through the project, we provided services that resulted in a safer and healthier home environment for enrolled children and their families, and we learned how to effectively impact child health through changes in the home environment.”

In this country, over 20 million people, including 6.2 million children, suffer from asthma. Fourteen million days of school are missed each year as a result of the disease. In 1999, asthma was responsible for 2 million emergency department visits, 478,000 hospitalizations and 4,426 deaths.

The Phoenix study found that the following steps, if done properly and consistently, will reduce asthma:

- Vacuum often and, importantly, use HEPA (High Efficiency Particle Air) filters to remove dust.
- Keep children with asthma out of a room while vacuuming or dusting.
- Consider removing carpet from the bedroom and replacing with smooth and cleanable floors, such as linoleum or wood flooring.
- Use zippered “allergen resistant” mattress and pillow covers to keep dust mites out of sleeping spaces.
- Change bed sheets often and wash with hot water.
- Keep foods stored in tightly sealed containers to avoid attracting cockroaches and rodents. Clear crumbs, drips, spills, and dirty dishes immediately.
- Identify and quickly fix water leaks in your home.
- Keep people with asthma away from dust, dust mites, and smoke.
- Quit smoking, or smoke only outside your home and car. Always keep tobacco smoke away from children.
- Find out what allergies you have so you can avoid these potential asthma triggers.

Selected from the patient list at the Phoenix Children’s Hospital, the City of Phoenix Head Start or Housing Rehab Specialists, the 67 families involved in the study had 184 children, 63 of them had asthma.

Dust in carpets, bedding, and in the heating and cooling system, poor general housekeeping, musty smell, and observed cockroach infestation were found in 52% to 69% of the homes at baseline. At the conclusion of the study, 96% of parents reported that the health of their children with asthma had improved.

The NCHH study also looked at safety hazards in the homes, such as improper storage of household products and electrical wiring. At the start of the study, safety hazards were observed in all of the homes. Following the study, ninety-seven percent of the caregivers reported that their homes were safer.

Annually in the U.S., over 18,000 unintentional injuries result in death. Home hazards are the cause of 12 million nonfatal injuries and 14,000 burn injuries. Over 3,000 people die in home fires each year.

The findings of the study suggest that comprehensive educational, health and safety device disbursement, and housing interventions reduce residential health and safety hazards and improve the health of children.

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*About the National Center for Healthy Housing*

National Center for Healthy Housing is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation based in Columbia, Maryland, dedicated to developing and promoting practical methods to protect children from

residential environmental hazards while preserving the supply of affordable housing. NCHH has over a decade of experience conducting applied research, program evaluation, technical assistance, training, outreach, and case management focused on reducing the health consequences of indoor exposures. NCHH staff includes housing, health, and environmental professionals with expertise in biostatistics, epidemiology, environmental health, public health, housing policy, and industrial hygiene.