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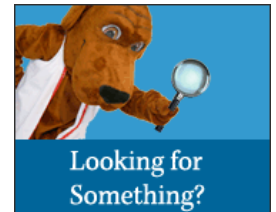
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Cleanlink News April 10 2009



## Research: Clues to Dust/Asthma Connection

Asthma is the most common chronic disease of childhood, and studies indicate it disproportionately affects inner-city children living in public housing.

In most cases, asthma is triggered by airborne allergens, usually dust, that cause respiratory inflammation, airway constriction and wheezing.

Scientists have long wondered if there is a specific allergen in dust that causes asthma. According to a study just reported in the *New York Times*\*, it now appears that scientists from the Boston University School of Medicine have finally discovered one of the key culprits.

Dust was collected from homes in public housing facilities using a vacuum cleaner. The dust sample contained cockroach remains, which become airborne after the insects die. Laboratory mice that inhaled this dust soon experienced difficulty breathing, showing signs that they were experiencing an asthma attack.

#### *Reaction and Prevention*

Many scientists, including those not directly involved in the research, have expressed excitement regarding this discovery. Said Dr. Lester Kobzik of Harvard Medical School, "[Now we know] the nasty material people actually become allergic to."

According to Jolynn Kennedy, marketing manager at Tornado Industries, one reason scientists were so excited by this discovery is because most previous tests searching for the allergens that induce asthma have been performed in artificial, laboratory settings. "In this case, however, they found the cause of the problem [by] turning to a real-life situation: vacuuming a carpet," she says.

Just like the scientists, Kennedy says that although the professional cleaning industry was not aware of the medical reason why dust can cause respiratory illness, they did know that "there is a direct connection," she says. "At least now we know all of our work and research into high-filtration, HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaners that can capture and trap many of these allergens were for a good cause."

\* April 7, 2009, *Dust Yields Clue to Asthma: Cockroaches* by Elissa Ely

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