



The Menen Centre For Optimum Health

Health and Home

As the majority of the population spends 50% of their time or more within their home, it should be no small wonder that there would be a connection between the health of an individual and the home they live within. Over the years there have been many positive innovations with regards to home construction and design in order to make one's residence as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible. Beyond this, what types of factors within the home can influence someone's health?

Two of the most important needs that a home should be able to provide are protection from the elements and an atmosphere of reasonable purity.

Of the elements, heat, cold and dampness are of most concern. Extreme temperature variations place a lot of stress on the body's ability to regulate its own temperature, in turn weakening the body's ability to maintain strong immune function. Often, people will catch a cold or flu during the spring or fall when temperatures outside become most variable. It is therefore also important to make sure the temperatures within your home are kept relatively stable as well. Ensuring your home is well insulated will prevent the loss of heat in the winter and will help keep out the heat during the summer while your air conditioning is running. An energy saving programmable thermostat can also help to ensure the temperature within your home stays relatively constant while you are actually at home. Dry homes will also help to minimize molds and mildew within the home. Mold can have dramatic effects on health and can lead to susceptibility to asthma, headaches, fatigue and can ultimately depress immune function. Moisture within the home also allows dust mites to thrive which can make these problems even worse. Moisture within the home can be the result of poor insulation, leaks of the roof or foundation, flooding, poor window installation or inadequate ventilation. The installation of a dehumidifier may help to reduce dampness within the home but the root cause should ultimately be determined and rectified.

Keeping a clean atmosphere within the home is also very important. The home, being an enclosed space, can allow impurities or pollutants to accumulate and build up to as much as ten times or more than the levels found outside. The most common pollutant found within the home is dust. Dust generally comes from two sources;

particles tracked indoors on shoes or drawn into the home through ventilation/heating and by dust mites living inside our homes. Increased dust levels can contribute to allergies and sensitivities, can promote the development of asthma, can cause sinus congestion, headaches and fatigue. Other pollutants can include carbon monoxide (often from unmaintained gas appliances, cracked heat exchangers on furnaces or leaking chimneys) and volatile organic compounds/VOC's (often a result of "offgasing" of paints, adhesives, new flooring, etc.). Dust can be reduced by designing entryway systems to help remove dust from our shoes before we bring them inside. Also, ensuring air filters are regularly replaced (preferably a hypo-allergenic filter) will reduce the amount of dust distributed within the home through the ventilation system. Reducing humidity within the home also helps reduce dust levels by making homes less inviting to dust mites. To avoid carbon monoxide emissions, ensure you have gas appliances properly maintained and inspected. Ensure that you are using low emission paints/adhesives when renovating to avoid VOC exposure as well as checking with manufacturers as to whether carpets are low in VOC's or not.

Other considerations are the amount of light available within the home, both natural and artificial as these will affect natural levels of Vitamin D (important for bone health and cancer prevention) and melatonin (important for maintaining healthy sleep patterns) produced within the body. The amount of noise within the home also impacts peoples health by impacting their emotional well being.

If there's worry over the strength of the immune system, remember the value of both Vitamin C and Zinc in their ability to support immune function. Vitamin C is found in a majority of fruit, especially citrus and kiwi fruit. Zinc is rich in nuts and seeds, especially pumpkin seeds. If toxin exposure is a worry, it may be a good idea to start an annual 'detox' plan under the supervision of a licensed Naturopathic Doctor or other licensed health care provider. Detoxification can be addressed through diet, herbs, hydrotherapy and various lifestyle changes/exercises.

Your home may be your castle. Just make sure the King and/or Queen stay healthy within it!

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