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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SPRING CLEANING IS GOOD FOR YOU!
A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

You might not guess it if you step outside today, but spring is here! And that means spring cleaning – it's not only good for the soul; it's good for the body too!

“There are many ways that giving your home a good spring clean can be beneficial to your health,” said Joshua Lipsman, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “You can remove asthma triggers and hazardous chemicals from your home and also lower your risk of West Nile virus by clearing up the yard,” he said.

Mosquitoes lay their eggs in still water where they can survive the winter and will hatch in the spring. Since mosquitoes do not travel far, breeding sites in your yard will greatly increase your chances of suffering mosquito bites or even West Nile virus.

“Removal of mosquito breeding sites on your property has been found to be an especially effective way of reducing your exposure to mosquito bites and the risk of West Nile virus,” said Dr. Lipsman. He offers these tips for eliminating standing water from your property:

- Dispose of old tires, cans, drums, and wheelbarrows.
- Cover outdoor containers that may collect water, or drill holes in the bottom of them.
- Clear leaf litter from roof gutters and around the yard.
- Keep swimming pools chlorinated. Have disused swimming pools removed or filled.

MORE

Old tires, in particular, are very popular breeding sites for mosquitoes. A list of sites throughout Westchester County where old tires may be dropped off at any time of year is available on Health Department website at www.westchestergov.com/health .

Residents may also call the Health Department’s West Nile Information Line at (914) 813-5609 or visit the Health Department website for more information on eliminating mosquito breeding sites on their property.

Sprucing up inside the home can be just as important to your health. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, air quality inside the home is often worse than outside, even in large cities.

“Since many people spend as much as 90 percent of their time indoors, environmental quality inside the home can have a great impact on health,” said Dr. Lipsman.

For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 20 million Americans, including 6.3 million children, suffer from asthma – a lung disease that is potentially life-threatening and is the leading cause of chronic disease related school absences. Asthma attacks may be brought on by a variety of asthma triggers found in the home, such as dust mites, molds and pet dander. Cleaning up these triggers may be the best thing you can do for any asthma sufferers in your home.

In older homes, lead paint may also present a significant health hazard to young children. Wet-wiping out the dust and paint chips that collect in the bottom of windows and may contain harmful lead is one simple way of reducing the risk of lead poisoning. More tips on reducing the hazards of lead in the home are available at the Health Department website.

Spring cleaning is also a great time to dispose of old junk that may be cluttering up the home. Some of that junk may contain harmful chemicals like mercury, which can be found in some old thermometers, thermostats and barometers. These items, along with other old or unwanted products like pesticides, and flammable liquids such as kerosene, gasoline and charcoal fluid, need to be disposed of properly to prevent environmental pollution. Make plans now to dispose of unwanted household chemicals at Household Chemical Clean-Up Days on Friday, May 7th from 1 - 3 p.m. and Saturday, May 8th from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park, Yorktown Heights. For a list of acceptable items and directions to the site, residents should visit the Health Department website or call the Household Chemical Info-Line at (914) 813-5425. or.

“We would like to stress that residents have the power within their own hands to make a great difference in the quality of their environment and their health by applying a little ‘elbow grease’,” said Dr. Lipsman. “Cleaning is good exercise too!”

For more information, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000.

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