



Dinner Guests & Allergies

This holiday season, many Americans will host gatherings with family and friends. Millions will have guests with allergy or asthma concerns. One in six Americans, about 50 million people, suffer from some form of allergies or asthma, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI). But for those who do not cope with the conditions daily and first-hand, it can be difficult to know what special accommodations are needed. What if a dinner guest has a food allergy? Or your mother-in-law is allergic to your cat? The AAAAI offers these tips for holiday hosts to keep their guests' asthma and allergy symptoms in hibernation:

- Ask about food allergies before planning a menu. Remember that even trace amounts of an offending food can trigger an allergic reaction. Keep track of ingredients used and avoid cross-contamination by thoroughly washing utensils, cookware and food storage between uses.
- Dust and vacuum regularly in the weeks leading up to the gathering. This will help minimize dust mites, animal dander and other potential allergy triggers. Don't forget to vacuum upholstered furniture and drapery.
- Replace furnace air filters so they can properly trap allergens.
- Clean guest rooms thoroughly the day before visitors arrive, including dusting, vacuuming and washing sheets and pillowcases in hot water.
- If visitors are sensitive to animals, keep all pets out of guests' rooms. Do not allow cats or dogs to rub against guests or climb in their laps. If necessary, keep pets confined to another area of the house, such as the basement.
- Limit fragrant candles, plants and potpourris as many allergic people are sensitive to these odors. Apply perfume conservatively, as well.
- Don't burn wood in the fireplace. Smoke and ash can provoke breathing difficulty or an asthma attack. Also, request guests smoke cigarettes outdoors