

## **Leave it at the Door**

Terri Black, Burke County Family & Consumer Sciences Extension Agent

It all seems to appear magically. I'm sure you know what I mean. The dust on the bookshelf, the cobwebs on the ceiling, the dirt on the kitchen floor and on the carpet, and yes, even the allergy and asthma attacks. Even though we probably only think about it while sweeping, dusting, vacuuming, and sneezing, researchers estimate that 30 to 40 percent of the contaminants inside your home are brought in from outdoors.

Here is the really gross part. There may be insect fragments, lead dust, pesticides, pollen, dust mites, animal dander, hair, human skin flakes, fungal spores or cigarette ash coming into your home. They can enter on your shoes, clothing, or your pets can track them in on their paws and fur. Not surprisingly, the largest amount of household dust is found in carpeting near the entryway.

Do I have your attention yet? If so, you may be wondering what you can do to reduce these indoor contaminants. The truth is that the first four steps you take inside your front door bring in close to 85 percent of the outdoor contaminants found inside your home. Fortunately, it is very simple to leave dirt, debris, and germs at the door.

The first step is to place doormats by every exterior door, including the door between your garage and house. One of the best ways to reduce tracking in contaminants is to have a hard surfaced walkway, such as a paved sidewalk, leading to the front door of your home. Place a grate-like scraper mat outside your entry door and scrape your feet on it before going inside. Just inside the door, place another doormat with grooves that will trap soil and water. If you have space, add a second doormat. The purpose of this mat is to capture and hold any remaining particles or moisture from the bottom of your shoes. You may also want to remove your shoes and just leave them at the door. The carpet inside your home acts like a doormat, scraping off debris and dirt with every step you take. Removing your shoes at the door not only leaves icky stuff behind, it reduces wear and tear on your floors, and time spent cleaning.

By taking a few simple steps you can improve the health of your home and reduce the time spent cleaning. Findings from an EPA study indicated that when a doormat was used and shoes were not worn, lead dust and other chemicals in the home were reduced by about 60 percent. Leaving contaminants and shoes at the door has time, economic, and health benefits. Adding a doormat reduces the time and effort needed to clean your home. You will save money by reducing wear and tear on your carpets and floors. The health benefits come from reducing your exposure to pesticides, lead dust, and asthma and allergy triggers.