MONROE PLUMBERS AND PIPEFITTERS
LOCAL 671
BENEFIT FUNDS
MARCH 2006 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Local 671 Benefits Newsletter. This newsletter, past and future ones are available on the website www.meyergroup.com, click on the "union info" tab to access.

Dear Member:

No season is free of the miseries that indoor allergens cause. Take dust mites. Despite their size – so small that up to 500 live on a single gram of dust – these little critters cause wheezing, sneezing and other symptoms in one out of ten Americans. How? The microscopic mites feed on the dead skin flakes we shed, and each mite produces about 20 droppings that provoke allergic reactions.

Also, proteins in the dander (dead skin flakes), urine and saliva of dogs and cats become airborne when pets groom themselves. They trigger allergies, as can cockroach droppings, a leading cause of asthma attacks.

Mold, a potent allergen, often works in cahoots with dust mites to cause trouble. Plus, any of the 200 chemicals in the typical home (many in building materials) can set off symptoms. The key issue with any allergy is avoidance, which can be difficult with indoor allergens. It takes a multipronged approach to reduce exposure, since many people react to more than one allergen.

***Act like a plumber.**

Both dust mites and mold thrive in damp environments, so fix water leaks and remove basement dampness.

***Don't expect too much from air filters.**

There's no evidence that air filters are effective in controlling mite-induced allergy symptoms when used alone.

***Copy Mr. Clean.**

Scrub walls, baseboards and other surfaces regularly to reduce dust and to control pet allergens.

***Reconsider your floor plan.**

Carpeting, upholstered furniture and clutter are havens for dust mites. Using area rugs, which can be laundered more easily than wall-to-wall carpeting, can minimize exposure to mites.

The latest news on preventing heart attack and stroke.

Heart attacks and most strokes can be blamed on blocked blood flow, usually caused by a clot in an artery. When blood flow to the heart is stopped or reduced, it triggers a heart attack; when it's the brain that is deprived of blood, the result is the most common type of stroke. Together, heart disease and stroke kill some 931,000 Americans each year. Heart attack and stroke are two distinct diseases, but they do have some risk factors that overlap.

Two for One

Researchers are learning that strategies to lower heart attack risks can also protect against strokes. Regular exercise helps you manage or lose weight, which may decrease risk of high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes. Obesity, diabetes and hypertension are all significant risk factors for both heart attack and stroke.

The amino acid homocysteine plays a role in both conditions, too. Since 1996, the government has required that folic acid be added to grain products, mostly to prevent birth defects. But this B vitamin can also lower homocysteine levels, so this enrichment may have kept 48,000 Americans from dying of stroke or heart disease each year since 1996.

Medications may offer a one-two punch as well. A study published in The Lancet showed that cholesterol-lowering statins, often employed for those at risk of heart attack, could prevent strokes, too. Their help in preventing stroke may not be entirely to their cholesterol lowering effects. Still, a primary focus of heart attack prevention – lowering "bad" LDL cholesterol may also decrease stroke risk.

In another study, published in Circulation, a four-drug regimen prescribed to reduce stroke risk was also found to reduce heart attack and angina patients' risk of dying within six months by 90 percent. We're beginning to see that the combination of drugs does more than each drug individually.

WARNING SIGNS

For Heart Attack:

Uncomfortable **pressure**; squeezing or **fullness** in the center of your chest that continues for several minutes; **pain** in one or both arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach; feeling **out of breath;** breaking out in a **cold sweat; nausea; lightheadedness**

For Stroke:

Sudden **numbness** or **weakness** in the face, arm or leg-especially on one side of the body; **confusion; trouble speaking** or understanding; **problems seeing** in one or both eyes; problems walking or maintaining balance; **dizziness** or severe **headache** with no known cause.