

# Carpet cleaning and health - what's the truth?

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Wouldn't it be a better world if your customers, clients or facilities believed that listening to your experience and expertise would result in cleaner carpet and a healthier indoor environment?

Because of a lack of cleaning education on their part, it's a fact that most complaints about carpet are due to cleaning and maintenance issues.

There are billions of yards of carpet on the market crying out for better cleaning and maintenance.

Instead of analyzing current cleaning programs and increasing frequency of cleaning, consumers blame the product - the carpet.

## **Can we educate?**

Because of the aforementioned problems, the carpet often looks terrible and the solution - to the consumer - is to replace them with hard flooring.

It's interesting that the hard floors in a home *or* facility will get a frequent cleaning, while carpet is ignored until it is blamed for non-performance.

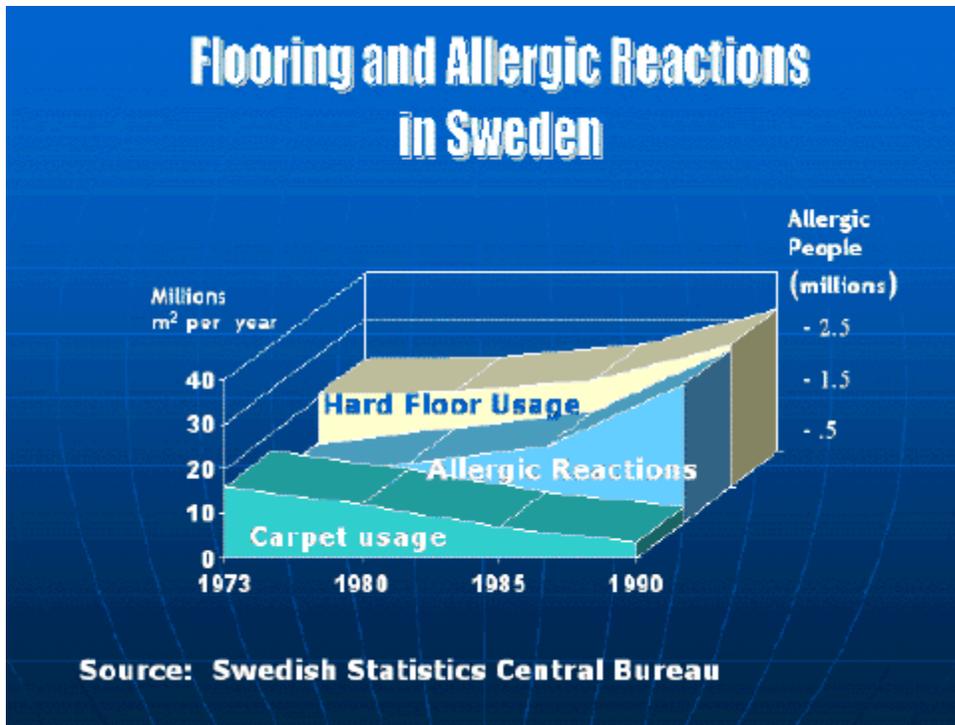
And therein lurks the problem - and the solution. Clean each surface equally, with the same dedication, and you will see myths dispelled.

If we, as cleaning professionals, have a solid education as to how to clean all surfaces effectively and to the best of our abilities, we can pass this information on to decision makers, whether these are homeowners, building owners or facility managers.

Carpet myths *abound* in today's world. Let's look at some of these that affect your customers or facilities.

## **Health comes first**

A study commissioned in Sweden is often cited as proof that carpet is a good choice for healthier indoor air quality. Here is a graph of the study results:



Many blamed carpet as the culprit for allergy sufferers. They said that carpet was the cause of poor indoor air quality.

This [PDF document](#) can be downloaded to your computer and used in educating your clients. The document shows that carpet de-selection occurred because of a nationwide concern of allergens.

Interesting is the fact that allergic reactions and other illnesses blamed on carpet in homes and facilities went up dramatically during the years of less carpet usage.

Quite the opposite of what was expected.

Sweden has become a nation consuming less and less carpet, and at the same time, suffering more and more from what was originally blamed on carpet.

When you analyze and compare all living conditions in today's world, carpet actually makes a healthier home or facility. You don't have the dust load in the air as you do with hard floors - all things being equal, of course, and cleaned accordingly.

Dust mites and pet dander are often blamed for allergic reactions. Both can build up in carpet, and both can be found on hard floors. We won't even go into tobacco smoke, pollution from automobiles, pollens, and more...

When in carpet, the proper vacuum system - used regularly - along with regular carpet cleaning, keeps allergen levels low.

For hard floors, the proper dusting and mopping system is important. With just a small amount of air movement on a hard floor, allergens are swept up into the air and into the respiratory systems of occupants.

## **Potential carpet problem**

Many people feel that carpet is a "dirt sink" that traps potentially dangerous contaminants.

True, and a positive aspect of carpet.

With carpet, the fibers act as a filter and hold onto contaminants until they can be vacuumed or cleaned. Hard floors do not do that.

One way to see this for yourself is to watch the air in a home or business when the sun is shining into the home. With carpeted surfaces, you see some dust in the air, but not much.

So you have two options:

**Option #1:** Carpet, which will hold onto dirt and contaminants until the carpet is either vacuumed or cleaned.

**Option #2:** Hard floors, which do not hold onto dirt and contaminants, but still perform well if cleaned regularly.

Regular cleaning makes any building or home healthier. Don't blame the product - instead, make it perform better with better maintenance.

Carpet has another great trait: There are less slip and fall accidents on carpeted surfaces.

Education is vital.

## **Carpet and mold**

Can mold grow on carpet? Yes. Can mold grow on just about *any* surface? Yes. All it needs is an organic base - dirt, as one example.

Mold grows most often when it has a food source, moisture, a warm temperature and typically a dark place to reside.

Mold does not use carpet as a food source. Today's carpet, the vast majority, is made from synthetic materials. Mold has no "appetite" for these materials.

Mold, however, will use contaminants in carpet as a food source, so if a carpet is damaged (water damage, sewage, etc) and not remediated properly, mold can grow on it.

It also will grow on the walls, concrete, furnishings, and hard floors.

It's not picky. It just needs certain things to exist, just like people need certain things to exist. Control those things and mold should not be a concern.

## **Carpet and off-gassing?**

People who are chemically sensitive definitely have a challenge in today's world.

Carpet is no more of a problem for chemical reaction than any other product on the market.

Some claim that carpet off-gasses fumes, such as formaldehyde. Formaldehyde isn't used in the manufacturing of carpet.

Any odors from a new carpet is simply a "new carpet odor", just as you might find in a new car or other manufactured product.

Then people blame the latex in carpet, saying they have an allergic reaction to the natural glues.

Problem is, latex in today's carpet is also synthetic, which studies show does not contribute to allergic reactions.

How can you respond to customers and clients when they begin to question the value of carpet? Educate them. Have documentation from organizations such as the [Carpet and Rug Institute](#). There are plenty of documents you can use as your education arsenal.