

Dust Mite Allergy

House dust contains tiny pieces of fabric, dander, plant matter and creatures so small that they can not be seen by the human eye. These tiny creatures are called house dust mites. Dust mites are present in all homes, no matter how clean. They do not live on humans but live in bedding, upholstered furniture, carpet and stuffed toys. They live in warm, humid places and feed on dead skin cells that fall off of the human body. If dust mite waste particles are inhaled or come in contact with the skin of a person who is allergic, they may cause runny nose, itchy eyes, cough, wheezing and skin itching.

Dust Mite Facts

- Dust mites live in beds and furniture.
- Dust mites need to feed to stay alive.
- Dust mites live in warm, humid places.
- Dust mites do not live in air ducts in homes. Duct cleaning will not reduce numbers of dust mites. Filters on the heating/cooling systems or the vents will not control dust mites though will help reduce dust in the home.
- Cleaning is helpful to reduce the amount of dust but will not change the source or numbers of dust mites.
- Chemicals and sprays are not needed and will not have a lasting effect on the number of dust mites. They can also be harmful to family members with asthma.

Dust Mite Control

The best way to control reactions to dust mites is to not be exposed. Unfortunately, it is hard not to come in contact with them. It is possible to reduce the amount of exposure by making certain changes, especially in the bedroom.

Controlling Dust Mites

- Enclose mattresses, box springs and pillows in zippered, dust mite proof covers. The cover label should list protection against dust mite allergens. The fabric weave should be 2-10 microns, though this is not always listed.
- Wash sheets and pillow cases weekly in hot water and dry in a hot dryer.
- Wash blankets and stuffed toys twice a month in hot water and dry in hot dryer. Water temperature needs to be at least 130° Fahrenheit.
- Humidity level in the home should be less than 50%. Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner if needed. An inexpensive hygrometer can be purchased at any hardware store to keep track of humidity in the home.
- If you have carpet, vacuum weekly, using a high efficiency filter bag.
- Wood or vinyl floors are better than carpet.
- If a dust mite allergic person has to do the vacuuming, a mask should be worn.
- Stuffed animals should be washable in hot water.
- Limit clutter in the bedroom.
- All dusting should be done with a damp cloth.
- Use window blinds that can be wiped down, rather than curtains.

More information about dust mites may be found on-line at

www.NationalAllergy.com www.aaaai.org/patients/publicedmat/tips/indoorallergens.stm
www.aafa.org/display.cfm?id=9&sub=22&cont=315

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