

## Indoor Allergens

An allergen is something around you that can cause allergy symptoms. Symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Itchy watery red eyes
- Runny nose
- Stuffy nose

If you have asthma, being around allergens can cause you to cough and wheeze. Indoor allergens can cause symptoms all year since they are always present.

### Indoor Allergens

- Dust mites
- Animal dander
- Cockroaches
- Certain molds

### Steps to Limit Indoor Allergens

**Dust mites** like warmth and dampness.

They feed on shredded skin and are found where people spend a lot of time. They are found in large numbers in carpet, bedding and fabric covered furniture.

**Pet allergens** are in animal dander and saliva. Rodents such as hamsters, mice, rabbits, and guinea pigs have allergens in their urine. All warm-blooded animals, even farm animals, can be allergens. There is no such thing as a non-allergic dog or cat. For people who have a pet allergy, you should remove the animal from the home. If you cannot, you should keep the pet out of your bedroom and limit contact. You should not clean out a rodent's cage.

**Cockroach allergy** is a big problem in crowded, urban areas. Cockroach allergen is in the droppings, saliva and body parts. To control cockroaches, seal off areas where they enter the home. Also, keep food in covered containers and counter tops clean. Keep indoor garbage cans covered. Repair any leaking pipes or faucets. You may need a pest control company to get rid of them. If you are renting and have cockroaches, contact your landlord for help.

**Indoor molds and mildew** occur where it is damp. Mold and mildew are often found in basements or bathrooms or where there is a water leak. Visible mold on hard surfaces can be cleaned with water and soap. Sometimes you need vinegar. When using vinegar, apply it either with a cloth or spray bottle. Let it sit for 30 minutes – then scrub to remove the mold. Vinegar will not harm your health. The vinegar smell will go away within an hour. We do not suggest bleach because it can irritate family members with asthma.

To prevent mold:

- Fix water leaks.
- Remove mold or moldy items.
- Control humidity. Dehumidifiers and air conditioning can help to lower dampness.
- Good air flow is important in bathrooms and kitchens. Run the fan in the bathroom after taking a bath or shower.
- Avoid carpet in basements.
- Avoid storing items in damp areas.

## Treating Symptoms

Medicines can help your symptoms. These medicines can include:

- An antihistamine (helps runny/itchy nose/eyes, sneezing),
- A nose spray (helps nasal stuffiness)
- An eye drop (helps itchy eyes).

You should take the allergy medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

Immunotherapy or allergy “shots” may be used for children and adults who still have symptoms even while taking allergy medicines.

To find out more about indoor allergens:

[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7384.