



## DUST MITE ALLERGY

### ***House dust allergies are common even in clean homes.***

House dust is a major cause of allergy symptoms including year-round stuffy nose, itchy, watery eyes and sneezing. Dust can also make people with asthma experience wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.

House dust is a mixture of many substances including tiny pieces of fabric, dander, plant matter, and microscopic creatures called dust mites. Dust mites are present in all homes, no matter how clean and are an important cause of allergic reactions to house dust. Dust mites do not live on humans but live in bedding, upholstered furniture, carpet and stuffed toys. Dust mites feed on dead skin cells that fall off of the human body and produce waste particles. It is the waste particles that are responsible for causing allergy symptoms. Dust mites prefer temperatures at or above 70°F with a relative humidity of 75-80% and die when the humidity falls below 40-50%. They are rarely found in dry climates.

### ***Dust Mite Facts:***

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

### ***What can I do to relieve my symptoms from dust mites?***

- Avoidance: try to reduce exposure.
- Medications.
- Allergy shots (immunotherapy).

### ***How can I reduce my exposure?***

- Encase mattresses, box springs, and pillows with dust mite proof or allergen impermeable covers. These can be purchased at stores like Target, Walmart, Bed Bath & Beyond, or online at Amazon.com, to name a few. Look for a fabric weave of 2-10 microns, if not listed.
- Use washable blankets and spreads and wash all bedding and blankets once a week in hot water (at least 130-140°F) to kill dust mites. Freezing non-washable items for 24 hours can also kill dust mites.
- Replace wool or feathered bedding with synthetic materials.
- Get rid of stuffed animals, or use washable ones. These should also be washed once weekly in hot water.
- The humidity level in the home should be <50%. Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner (especially in the bedroom) if needed. An inexpensive hygrometer can be purchased at any hardware store or most department stores to keep track of humidity in the home.
- Use of a High Efficiency Particular Air (HEPA) air purifier to remove airborne allergen particles.
- Change or clean air conditioning and furnace filters often. Look for a filter with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 11 or 12 and change the filter every 3 months.
- If possible, replace wall-to-wall carpets in bedrooms with bare floors (linoleum, tile, or wood) and remove fabric curtains and upholstered furniture.
- Keep the house clean. If carpeting must be used, select one with a low pile. Vacuum all carpeted surfaces at least once weekly with either a vacuum containing either a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA filter.
- If a dust mite allergic person has to do the vacuuming, a mask should be worn. Stay out of the vacuumed area for 20 minutes to allow any dust and allergens to settle.
- Substitute wooden or plastic furniture for upholstered furniture, or choose vinyl, leather, or cloth furniture constructed with an additional allergen barrier.
- Use window blinds that can be wiped, rather than curtains.
- Always use a damp mop, cloth, or rag to remove dust.
- Limit clutter in the bedroom.
- Hang clothes in a closet and keep the closet door closed or put them into dresser drawers.
- Never allow pets in the bedroom as dust mites feed on animal dander and can make symptoms worse.

### ***What if avoiding dust mites doesn't work for me?***

#### ***Or what if I wish to use as little medication as possible?***

- If the above measures in combination with medication do not control your symptoms, you may be a good candidate for allergy shots.

### ***For more information about dust mites, you can go on-line to the following websites:***

- [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)
- [www.acaai.org](http://www.acaai.org)
- [www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)

### ***To measure specifically the amount of allergen exposure in your own home see this link:***

- [www.exhalenow.com](http://www.exhalenow.com)

***Be sure to apply the discount code: detjen***