

Dust Mite Allergy



ABOUT DUST MITES

Although there are many components in house dust to which people may be allergic, the most important is the dust mite: a microscopic, 8-legged insect-like creature which lives on the skin that is normally shed from humans.

Dust mites don't bite, cannot spread diseases, and never live on people, only in their environment. They are harmful only to those people who are allergic to them.

People aren't actually allergic to mites themselves. They are allergic to their fecal pellets (droppings), which are about the size of a grain of pollen. And like pollen, mite droppings can become airborne during household chores or whenever bedding is disturbed.

House dust mites thrive in warm, humid environments. They prefer temperatures at or above 70 degrees and humidity above 50%. Because they feed on shed human skin scales, mattresses and pillows are ideal places for mite infestation. And since most people spend about a third of their lives in the bedroom, this is the best place to start avoidance measures.

CONCENTRATE ON YOUR BED

- » Encase your pillows, mattress, and box springs in zippered, airtight covers* — mites can't get in. And the ones inside can't get out. If there is more than one bed in the room, all should be encased. ***This is the single most important thing you can do.***
- » Comforters can be washed or encased in zippered dust-proof covers.
- » Use pillows stuffed with Dacron or other synthetic materials, rather than feathers, down, kapok, or foam rubber.
- » Avoid wool and down blankets.

WASHING INSTRUCTIONS

- » Wash all bedding (blankets, sheets, pillowcases, and mattress covers) weekly in hot water – at least 130 degrees.
- » Bulkier bed linens (quilts, comforters, bedspreads) should be washed every two weeks.
- » If unable to be washed, remove stuffed animals from sleeping areas. Other toys should have a wipeable surface, such as plastic or wood.
- » Small items can be placed in a freezer for 24 hours to kill dust mites.

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MORE TIPS TO DEAL WITH DUST MITES

- » Consider removing the bedroom carpet—especially if it is laid on concrete. Use washable area rugs instead.
 - › Area rugs can be placed in the sun for a few hours every 2-3 weeks to kill dust mites.
- » If forced air heat is used, seal off the bedroom ducts and use electric heat or an electric blanket if necessary.
- » Keep the closet door shut.
- » Avoid heavy curtains and venetian blinds. Use window shades instead.
- » Reduce clutter, such as open shelves with books and knickknacks.
- » Substitute wooden or plastic furniture for upholstered furniture.
- » Avoid sleeping or lying on upholstered furniture.
- » Avoid using a vacuum or being in a room while it is being vacuumed.
- » If you must vacuum, consider using a dust mask and special filter bag that can better contain the dust.