

DUST MITE ALLERGY INFORMATION

Dust mites are microscopic eight-legged creatures that are related to ticks and spiders. They grow in warm and humid areas and feed off human flakes of skin. Dust mites thrive in fabrics, such as mattresses, pillows, bedding, carpet, upholstered furniture and stuffed animals. Newer energy-efficient homes with limited ventilation, higher indoor temperatures and humidity all have led to increased dust mite levels.

Millions of tiny dust mites live in your home. It does not matter how clean your house is; the dust mite will continue to reproduce at an astounding rate. The bedroom should be the main area of focus. Symptoms are more common and severe in the morning, as exposure is higher overnight while sleeping in your bed.

Normal cleaning systems are of little help in eliminating dust mites. Here are some useful measures to reduce dust mite exposure:

- Cover the mattress, pillow and box spring with “dust mite proof” encasements. Vinyl and plastic are adequate but not as durable and comfortable as airtight cloth covers.
- Change sheets and pillowcases once a week; wash in hot water cycle (130 degrees).
- Avoid heavy drapes, extra pillows, canopies, stuffed animals and other dust catchers in the bedroom. Stuffed animals can be placed in a freezer for 12 hours every 10–14 days to kill mites.
- Clean and dust room with a damp rag frequently.
- Reduce use of any humidifiers and vaporizers in the bedroom. Try to keep humidity at 35 to 45%. Use a dehumidifier during warm, humid months.
- Reduce carpet if possible. Bare floors that can be damp dusted are preferable.
- Use a facemask while cleaning, vacuuming, or making beds.