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## Dust Mite Allergy

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### What are dust mites?

Dust mites are tiny animals that you cannot see. They live in pillows, blankets, carpets and soft materials around the house. They eat dead skin that all people shed each day. For this reason, they are also called house dust mites.

### What is a dust allergy?

After a dust mite eats, it gives off waste. A dust allergy means you are sensitive or allergic to the waste of dust mites. This is a common cause of eye irritation, nose symptoms and asthma.

### How can I control the dust mites around the home?

Dust mites like to live in the dark and need about 50% humidity to live. They like warm, dark places. The best way to reduce dust mite exposure is to focus on the bedroom.

### In the bedroom

- The most effective way to reduce dust mite exposure is to cover all mattresses and pillows in zippered allergen barrier covers. Breathable covers made from microfibre or special barriers are more comfortable than those made from vinyl or plastic.
- Wash all blankets and sheets in hot water every 2 weeks to kill live mites.
- Remove all items that collect dust on the bed such as stuffed toys, throw pillows and fabric furniture.
- Remove the carpet. Carpets are a source of mites in any room.
- A floor that can be wiped such as hardwood or vinyl is best. If you keep the carpet, use a dry carpet, cleaning product. Shampooing the carpet can increase dust mite growth.
- Clean the floor, woodwork, walls and ceilings with a damp cloth. Use products that make dust stick to the mop or cloth. Try not to use a dry mop or dry duster in the bedroom. If there is no carpet, do not use a vacuum cleaner. Vacuums may spread dust unless they have a good filter or Hepafilter.

- Remove curtains from the bedroom and replace with blinds or shades that can be wiped. Do not use vaporizers or humidifiers in the bedroom.
- The greater the humidity, the greater the growth of dust mites. A humidifier maintaining 30% to 50% humidity in the house in the winter is all you need. You can measure indoor humidity using a device called a Hygrometer. You can buy a hygrometer at a hardware department.
- If you use a floor-type humidifier, add an anti-mold solution.
- Gas furnaces, when first turned on for the season, circulate dust, mold and animal dander throughout the house. It is a good idea to place a disposable anti-allergen filter in the furnace such as a 3 M Filtrate.
- Change or wash the furnace filter each month or follow the directions that come with the anti-allergen filter.

### **In the rest of the house**

- Follow the same guidelines in the bedroom for any room in the house that the allergic person spends time in such as the TV room.
- To remove dust from carpets and sofas, vacuum once a week.
- It is best to have the allergic person out of the house or in the kitchen while this is being done. Living rooms are often very dusty. The allergic person may feel better spending more time in other rooms.
- Use a good vacuum or central vacuum system.
- If the person is allergic to a pet, remove the pet from the house. Animals add to the growth of house dust mites. If you must have a pet, keep it out of the bedroom.
- Keep the laundry room, furnace room and TV area well cleaned. Dryers should be vented to the outside to reduce dust indoors.
- If you plan to live in an apartment, pick one that is not in the basement.