

House Dust Mite Sensitivity

Allergy Information

House dust mites are microscopic insects which live in the dust in carpets, mattresses, bedding, furnishing and soft toys. Mites thrive in humidity and dislike strong sunlight. Many people with asthma, rhinitis and eczema are sensitive to the droppings of house dust mites.

If you are sensitive to dust mite you may see an improvement in your symptoms if the amount of dust mite in your home is reduced. Unfortunately despite being sensitised to dust mite some people will not see a significant improvement even if these measures are followed. There is no way to predict how useful these measures will be without trying them.



Ways to reduce House Dust Mite levels:

Bedrooms:

The bedroom is the most important area to make changes as this is where a considerable portion of each day is spent and large numbers of mites thrive in mattresses etc.

- Cover the mattress, duvet and pillows with special house dust mite barrier covers. These can be purchased from most of the big department stores, pharmacies and some websites. House dust mite covers are probably the single most useful measure you can take.
- Turn back bedding daily to air the mattress.
- Wash sheets and blankets weekly at 60°C.
- Reduce humidity by closing bathroom and kitchen doors, opening windows and do not dry towels in the bedroom.
- Remove soft toys from beds.
- Reduce mite levels in soft toys every 1-2 weeks by putting them in the freezer for at least 6 hours to kill the mites. If possible then wash and dry them.

General:

- Open windows every day to ventilate the house
- Vacuum carpets as often as possible. 'Ordinary' vacuum cleaners are probably as good as expensive special filter ones.
- Vacuum soft furnishings eg sofas twice weekly if possible.
- If renewing flooring use wood floorboards or vinyl.
- Regularly wipe any surfaces which collect dust with a damp cloth.
- There is no good evidence that insecticide sprays to kill mites help because the dead mites and their droppings are left.

Further information is available from:

Asthma UK: www.asthma.org.uk Helpline: 08457 01 02 03
Allergy UK: www.allergyuk.org 01322 619898