

# House Dust Mite

---

## What are house dust mites?

House dust mites are tiny creatures that are invisible to the naked eye. They live in the dust that builds up around the house so you can also find them in carpets, bedding, beds, soft furnishings and soft toys. They are impossible to avoid.

House dust mites can trigger symptoms in individuals with asthma, eczema and allergic rhinitis.

The best way to reduce the effects of dust mites on your child's condition is to ensure they take or apply the medication that has been prescribed for them by a doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## What measures can I take to reduce dust mites?

Unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence to suggest taking measures to control house dust mites can help symptoms, and often these measures are time consuming and expensive. However, many of our patients and families have used some simple control measures and felt they were helpful.

By following the simple advice given in this leaflet, you may notice some improvement in your child's asthma, eczema and / or allergic rhinitis.

## What can I do in my child's bedroom?

- House dust mites love warm, humid environments, so open the window daily
- Wash bedding at 60 degrees centigrade weekly; washing at this temperature will kill the house dust mite
- Air the mattress thoroughly at least once a month
- Wash curtains every 2-3 months and do not have your child's bed directly below them if this can be avoided
- Consider buying a cheap pillow, which can be washed at 60 degrees centigrade or can be replaced regularly
- Use cotton or synthetic blankets instead of wool
- If bunk beds are used, your child with asthma should sleep on the top bunk
- Damp dust and vacuum at least weekly. An ordinary vacuum can be just as efficient as one with a filter. Don't forget to vacuum upholstery, curtains, and mattresses

- Try to keep the room as tidy as possible. Put clothes in wardrobes and avoid clutter on ledges where dust can accumulate
- Radiator heating is preferred over fan heaters
- If you are redecorating your child's room, consider replacing carpets with linoleum or wooden flooring, which are easier to clean and don't harbour house dust mites.
- Keep pets out the bedroom
- If you choose to buy protective covers for the bed, ensure they are the ones that fasten with a zip and remember the entire bed needs to be covered, including the mattress, pillow and duvet.

### **My child has a favourite cuddly toy – is there anything I can do with that?**

Yes! Try and remove excess soft toys from your child's room, especially at night. Their favourite toy can either be washed at 60 degrees centigrade or placed inside a polythene bag and frozen in your freezer for 6 hours. Remove it, allow it to defrost thoroughly then vacuum to remove dead house dust mites.

### **What can I do in other areas of the house?**

- Damp dust the living room, etc. rather than using a polish
- Vacuum regularly
- Vacuum upholstery
- Avoid smoking in the house.

Hopefully these simple measures will prove effective. Please feel free to discuss any issues with medical or nursing staff.

Royal Hospital for Children and Young People  
50 Little France Crescent  
Edinburgh EH16 4TJ  
Tel.: **0131 536 1000**

House Dust Mite