

House Dust Mites

Information and advice

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?

Measures to avoid house dust mite will lower, but do not totally remove, dust mite allergens. Often, this will be sufficient to significantly improve symptoms, but sometimes, the reduction may simply not be enough to result in a noticeable difference. There is no way to predict whether someone will benefit from avoidance measures, except by trying them. Remember that it is better to carry out several allergen avoidance measures properly in order to see an improvement in symptoms. Just doing one or two things may not make any difference.

Most efforts at controlling dust mites should be aimed at areas of the home where you spend most of your time and where dust mite load is greatest, i.e., bedrooms and living areas.

- Use allergen-proof barrier covers on all mattresses, duvets, and pillows. These should be breathable and should completely enclose the item with a zip. Buy products that have been tested to make sure that they prevent the escape of house dust mite allergen.
- Wash all bedding that is not encased in barrier covers (e.g., sheets, blankets) every week. Washing at 60 degrees centigrade or above will kill mites. House dust mite allergen dissolves in water so washing at lower temperatures will wash the allergen away temporarily, but the mites will survive and produce more allergen after a while.
- Allergic children should avoid sleeping in the bottom bunk bed where allergen can fall onto them.
- If you are considering redecorating your child's bedroom, consider changing carpet for hard flooring. Where carpets cannot be removed, vacuum regularly with a high filtration vacuum cleaner.
- Damp-wipe all surfaces each week.
- Use light washable cotton curtains if possible and wash them frequently. Reduce unnecessary soft furnishings.
- Vacuum all surfaces of upholstered furniture at least twice a week.
- Increasing ventilation, opening windows or vents. Use extract fans in bathrooms and kitchens.
- If necessary, use a dehumidifier.

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

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.

More information and advice can be found on the Allergy UK website:



www.allergyuk.org