



dust mites: tips for reducing dust mites allergens

Dust mites are tiny microscopic animals related to ticks and spiders that live in virtually every home.

Dust mites feed on skin flakes and can be found throughout the home, including mattresses, pillows, carpets, and furniture. These creatures produce airborne particles (*allergens*) that can trigger allergic reactions or asthma episodes when inhaled by children or adults who are sensitive to them.

The higher level of mite allergen in the home, the greater risk to children living in the home.

Ways to control dust mites in your home

- Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner in summer to maintain the relative humidity in your home at 50% or below. Reducing moisture in your home is the single most effective control for dust mites—they thrive in moist air.
- Encase your mattress and pillows in dust-proof or allergen impermeable covers (*available from specialty supply mail order companies, bedding and some department stores*). Dust mite levels in mattresses are more closely linked with asthma attacks than dust mites on the floor.
- Wash all bedding and blankets once a week in hot water (*at least 130-140° F*) to kill dust mites.
- Replace wool or feather-stuffed bedding materials with synthetic materials. Select stuffed animals and toys that are washable.
- If possible, replace wall-to-wall carpets in bedrooms with hard surface (*linoleum, tile or wood*) floors.
- Use a damp mop or rag to remove dust. Never use a dry cloth since this just stirs up mite allergens.
- Use a central vacuum cleaner vented to the outdoors or a vacuum cleaner with either a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA (*High Efficiency Particulate Air*) filter to trap allergens that pass through a vacuum's exhaust.
- Air filtration systems, including high efficiency furnace filters and whole house electronic air cleaners, may be helpful in reducing indoor air pollutants when used with effective source control and ventilation.

For further information:

- American Lung Association®: www.LungUSA.org
- American Lung Association® of the Upper Midwest Health House®: www.HealthHouse.org
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease: www.niaid.nih.gov/default
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): www.EPA.gov/iaq
- Local Department of Health

These tips are brought to you by the American Lung Association® of the Upper Midwest Health House® program. For more information on creating a healthier home environment, visit our website at www.HealthHouse.org.



Raising the Standards for Healthier Indoor Environments.

490 Concordia Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103.2441
Ph - 651.268.7614
Fx - 651.281.0242
Toll-free - 877.521.1491
www.HealthHouse.org