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DUST MITE ALLERGY

Dust mites are tiny bugs that live in bedding, mattresses, upholstered furniture, and carpets. No matter how clean your house is, it's impossible to completely get rid of dust mites. However, you can limit contact. They thrive in high humidity and on surfaces that contain dead skin flakes. The waste particles and fragments of the dead mites themselves become airborne and are inhaled.

Sensitivity to dust mites is very common, and specific allergy testing to the common mites can identify individuals who have a true allergic sensitivity. Some of the symptoms they produce may include runny nose, itchy watery eyes, nasal and sinus congestion, eczema, and asthma symptoms.



Photo Credit: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

Dust mite control measures:

- ▶ Keep the room humidity to less than 50%. Use a dehumidifier if necessary and use an air conditioner in the summer. Never use a humidifier.
- ▶ Encase mattresses, box springs, and pillows in impermeable covers. These encasements prevent the proteins from dead mites from escaping. They can be purchased at many stores where linen is sold, and are sometimes called "allergy-proof" covers.
- ▶ Bedding should be washed in hot water (130 F) and dried in the dryer every 1-2 weeks.
- ▶ Have washable pillows and avoid using pillows that are made of feathers as the mites tend to stick to them.
- ▶ Damp mop floors and surfaces weekly.
- ▶ Eliminate carpets if possible as they harbor dust mites and are stirred around when vacuumed. Washing carpeting can cause a moist environment that will actually cause mite growth.
- ▶ Remove dust collectors, such as knick knacks, stuffed animals, papers, and clutter.
- ▶ Use washable window coverings.