



Dust and Mite Management

House Dust

House dust generally consists of human skin scales, but may also contain pet dander, feather fibers (from bedding), clothing and carpet fibers, microscopic crumbs, soil particles, pollen or other plant particles. Small particles of dust can stay suspended in the air while heavier particles will settle on carpets, tables, shelves, or other surfaces. House dust may be inhaled into the respiratory tract.

Dust Mites

Dust mites are considered one of the most common causes of allergy and asthma symptoms. Dust mites are very small and are not visible to the naked eye. A dust mite egg will hatch and mature to adulthood over a one month period, though adult females may live another month and produce two hundred eggs. Mites lay their eggs in sloughed off skin scales that collect in mattresses, pillows, carpets, upholstered furniture, comforters, and blankets. Mites can also collect in clothing and be dispersed into the environment. Dust mites flourish on moisture (which is given off as you sleep and breathe into your pillow), so people who sweat profusely, sleep in over-heated rooms, or sleep under heavy blankets are more likely to have large infestations of mites. Thicker materials hold more moisture and therefore tend to be more colonized by dust mites. Thinner materials are better, as they tend to dry out more quickly and therefore do not provide optimal living and breeding conditions for mites. Dust mites increase their rate of reproduction, intake of skin scales, and defecation as the humidity in the air increases. The mite's fecal pellets (which may contain allergenic materials such as mite digestive enzymes or mold spores) tend to be the major source of allergy-related issues.

Management

- Use allergen-control covers on all pillows and mattresses in the house (including sofa beds and futons)
- Wash sheets and pillowcases weekly in hot water
- Wash blankets at least once monthly. Tumble weekly in a warm or hot dryer for 20 minutes
- Reduce the clutter in your home to lower the dust accumulation
- Dust and/or vacuum once or twice weekly, especially bedrooms, (don't forget to vacuum under the bed)
- Use a vacuum or a wet mop instead of a broom
- Do not use feather/down or foam pillows, down quilts, only pillows that are machine washable
- Do not store possessions under your bed
- Remove cobwebs (they can collect dust)
- Tumble curtains in the dryer to remove dust
- Dust book shelves frequently and wear a mask when cleaning
- Use air filters to trap airborne allergens. <http://www.airpurifierguide.org/faq/cadr>
- Avoid upholstered furniture and curtains where allergens can build up, instead choose leather furniture and window blinds (which are wipeable)
- Use an air conditioner and dehumidifier to keep humidity low and discourage dust mite growth