



Dust mites

About dust mites

Dust mites are microscopic creatures that feed on shed human skin cells and are common allergen triggers for asthma. Dust mites do not bite or sting people. Their droppings and body fragments can trigger allergic reactions in some people. Allergen particles range in size from 5 to 40 microns.

Dust mites thrive in warm and humid environments, and can live in soft furnishings such as beds, bedding, carpets, upholstered furniture, soft toys or clothing and are primarily found inside homes. Mould also encourages dust mite growth.

Dust mite allergens do not typically remain airborne for long but dust-raising activities such as vacuuming, dusting, playing on the floor and moving about in bed will stir them up.

Reducing your exposure

People with a confirmed allergy to dust mites should reduce their exposure. This involves killing dust mites, removing their allergens they produce and reducing breeding areas.

In the bedroom

The greatest exposure to dust mites is from your bed. Some useful measures to take are:

- covering your mattress, quilt and pillows with dust mite-resistant cases
- opening the curtains and airing your bedding in the sunshine
- washing sheets and pillowcases weekly in water hotter than 60°C
- using bedding products treated with an anti-microbial product like Ultra-Fresh®, Sanitized® or HealthGuard®
- removing untreated underlays
- removing soft toys from the bedroom, or washing them weekly in water hotter than 60°C. Freezing soft toys overnight will kill the dust mites but not their allergens.

Why a hot wash?

Washing bedding in water hotter than 60°C will kill dust mites and wash away the allergen they produce.

Hot tumble drying of washed items for 10 minutes after they are dry will also kill dust mites.

Dry cleaning is not as effective as it will kill dust mites but won't remove the allergen.

Around the house

- Use a damp or electrostatic cloth to dust hard surfaces, including hard floors.
- Vacuum carpets and soft furnishings weekly, using a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter vacuum cleaner if possible.
- Ask someone else to do the vacuuming while you leave the room, as vacuuming (even with a HEPA filter vacuum) increases the amount of dust mite allergen in the air for up to 20 minutes.
- Reduce indoor humidity. Maintain a dry and well-ventilated home with floor and wall insulation, no evaporative coolers or unflued gas heaters.
- Remember to clean window coverings (blinds and curtains) regularly.
- Consider dust mite avoidance measures when building or renovating your home.
- Opt for leather or vinyl lounges over fabric ones.
- Reduce pet dander as dust mites feed on it. Pet dander is also a common allergen.

Important reminder

Ensure you regularly see your doctor and keep your asthma and allergy action plans up to date.

Consult your doctor about a referral for allergy testing if you think you have an allergy.

Ensure you know how to use your medications correctly and that they are not expired.

Disclaimer: It is important to note that information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.