



## DUST MITE CONTROL IN THE HOME

### What are Dust Mites?

Dust mites are tiny, invisible insects that live in fibers on carpeting, plush furniture, curtains, mattresses, pillows and bedding. Unlike spiders or ticks, dust mites are not visible to the naked eye and do not bite or transmit disease. The average adult sheds two pounds of dead skin per year; much of it while sleeping. Dust mites live in bedding and mattresses and eat these flakes of skin. They prefer warm, humid environments.

### Why should we be concerned about dust mites?

Dust mite allergen is a very potent allergic trigger for some asthmatics. **FACT: Over 50% of all allergic asthmatics are sensitive to house dust mites.** Find out if you are allergic to dust mites. Talk to your Allergist or Immunologist about allergy testing. If you test positive for dust mite allergy, take steps to reduce dust mites in your home. With an average of eight hours of sleep nightly, the bedroom is the most frequently inhabited room in your home, and is a good first place to stop.

### Dust Mite Reduction Tips:

**One of the biggest decisions is whether or not to remove carpeting.** Removing carpeting from the bedroom and the rest of the house can be an important step, but it can also be expensive. If your carpeting is new, it will shed and give off gases for a long time. If it's older, chances are there is a lot of permanent dirt and dust embedded in the carpet that you just cannot vacuum out. Dust mites burrow into the carpet and hold on fast with little sucking pads on the ends of their legs, so it's virtually impossible to vacuum the live ones out. If carpet removal is impossible, regular cleaning is a must. Tests have shown that steam cleaning is more effective than cool shampooing.

**Where you sleep is where the dust mites are: in your mattress and pillow.** It's a good idea to encase your mattress and box-spring in zippered, allergy-proof covers. Breathable covers are more comfortable than plastic ones, which can be hot and sticky in warm weather. If there is more than one bed in the room, all should be encased. These covers are often available from home care companies, pharmacies, or medical device stores.

**Perhaps the most important factor in the control of mite growth is humidity.** If your home is air tight, then a sufficient ventilation system should be installed, such as a heat exchanger. In warmer, humid areas of the country, air conditioning should be used in the summer to reduce mite and mould growth.

### What can be done to control dust mite populations in your home?



Action	Cost			Effectiveness
	Low	Moderate	High	Fair, Good, Very Good
Wash all bed linen at least once per week. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-soak or use a longer wash cycle</li> <li>• Use an adequate amount of soap</li> <li>• Do not over-crowd the washer – ensure that clothes can move around in the laundry tub</li> <li>• Rinse well</li> </ul>	X			Very Good
Remove wall-to-wall carpeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace carpets with easy-to-clean surfaces, such as wood, tile or linoleum floors.</li> </ul>			X	Very Good
If you have carpeting, vigorously vacuum at least once per week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a vacuum equipped with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter.</li> <li>• Alternatively, use a central vacuum system that is vented to the outside(not the basement)</li> </ul>		X		Very Good
Damp mop flooring once a week	X			Very Good
Avoid excessive humidity in the home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a hygrometer to monitor humidity in the home.</li> <li>• Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner in the summer to keep relative humidity below 50%.</li> <li>• Do <b>not</b> use a humidifier or vaporizer in the winter</li> <li>• Clean up leaks immediately</li> <li>• Use bathroom and kitchen fans</li> </ul>	X  X  X	X		Very Good
Encase mattress, box spring and pillows in dust mite proof covers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encasements should have a <b>very</b> tight cotton weave</li> <li>• Covers the whole mattress and has a zipper</li> <li>• Tape over the zippers</li> </ul>			X	Very Good
Use washable blankets and duvets and launder them weekly	X			Good
Clean bedroom twice a week with damp cloth and mop. Avoid sweeping.	X			Good
Replace area carpets with washable throw rugs	X			Good
De-clutter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remove books, mobiles, ornaments, silk plants and shelves from bedroom</li> </ul>	X			Good
Keep storage closets closed and containers	X			Good



covered.				
Remove all drapes and curtains. • Replace with washable roll down blinds		<b>X</b>		<b>Good</b>
Remove any upholstered furniture from bedroom	<b>X</b>			<b>Good</b>
Remove all stuffed toys from the bedroom • Limit stuffed toys or purchase “asthma friendly” toys.	<b>X</b>			<b>Good</b>
Freeze non-washable stuffed toys for 24 hours and wash in cool water to rinse out dead dust mites.	<b>X</b>			<b>Fair</b>
Change furnace filters regularly and put a filter in the bedroom vent		<b>X</b>		<b>Fair</b>

**For More Information:**

Contact the Asthma Society of Canada at 1-866-787-4050 or visit [www.Asthma.ca](http://www.Asthma.ca).