



Allergy to Dust Mites

Dust mites (Picture 1) are tiny insects that live indoors. They thrive in pillows, mattresses, box springs, blankets, rugs and carpets, “stuffed animals,” and upholstered (cloth) furniture such as couches. They also live in dusty areas like furnace ducts. They are so tiny that they are hard to see without a microscope.

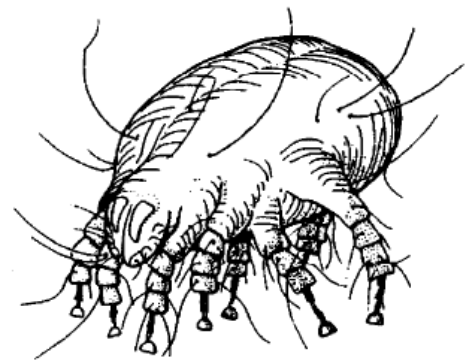
Dust mites feed on organic matter such as flakes of skin. They love padded material and prefer humid conditions. Both the enzymes in their feces and their hard shells can cause allergy and asthma symptoms. When a person who is sensitive to the dust mite breathes in these particles, they can cause allergy symptoms, including sneezing, coughing, runny nose, congestion and itchy, watery eyes. Dust mites can also cause asthma symptoms, such as coughing or wheezing.

The best way to reduce allergy symptoms due to dust mites is to cover the bedding with special dust mite covers and remove as much dust as possible. Pay special attention to your child's bedroom.

How to clean and dustproof your child's room

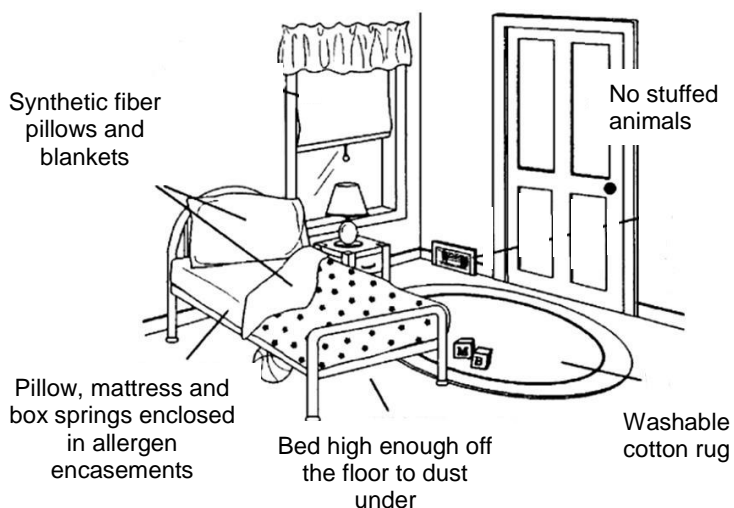
Follow these steps:

- **Seal** the pillows and mattress in a special zippered allergy cover (called an encasement). Box springs should have zippered, vinyl covers. These covers can be purchased on-line or in most stores that sell bedding.
- **Vacuum** floors once every week.
- **Damp-dust** the room well from top to bottom every 1 to 2 weeks. Include lights, window sills, furniture, shelves, ceiling fans, and blinds.



Picture 1 The dust mite
(shown much larger
than actual size)

- **Stuffed animals** and pillow pets should be placed away from the bed.
- **Blankets** should be cotton, rayon or synthetic fiber. Thin blankets are better than a comforter, quilt, or chenille bedspread.
- **Wash** all bedding, including sheets, every week. Use hot water (130 degrees F) or set the dryer to high heat to kill dust mites.



Picture 2 Ways to reduce dust mites in your child's room

- **Beds** in your child's room should have wooden or metal non-upholstered frames. Avoid sleeping on a couch, sofa, or sleeper sofa when possible.
- **Replace furnace filters** often, as directed by the manufacturer, every 3 months. Pleated filters work better than less expensive flat filters.
- **Dust** tends to collect in the **ducts** over time. Consider having a professional check your ducts every 5 to 10 years to see if they need to be cleaned.

More tips

- **Other rooms** - Your child should nap or sleep only in his own bed which has been prepared as directed. When your child visits away from home or travels, he should take his non-allergenic pillow with him. If the child plays or spends time in a room other than his bedroom, the room should be prepared like his bedroom. Try not to let your child play or lie on carpeted floors or sit or lie on stuffed furniture unless it is vinyl or leather.
- **Dusty objects** - Your child should not handle objects covered with dust, such as books or boxes of clothing if they have been stored in shelves or cupboards for a long time.
- **Dust mites** thrive in humid environments. Try to avoid a bedroom humidifier if your child is allergic to dust mites.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call the Allergy Clinic at (614) 722-5804.