

# Information About Dust Mite Allergies

Dust mites are common in homes across the globe. And they are one of the major indoor triggers for people with allergies and asthma. In fact, **most homes in the United States have detectable levels of dust mite allergen in at least one bed.**<sup>1</sup> Because it's impossible to avoid dust mite allergens completely, it's important to identify and treat your severe allergies.



## What Causes DUST MITE ALLERGIES?

Dust mites are microscopic indoor insects that thrive in items like pillows, mattresses, box springs, bedding, rugs/carpets, upholstered furniture, and stuffed toys. Dust mites eat the organic matter that composes dust, like dead human skin cells, animal dander, pollen, fungi, and bacteria. Instead of drinking water they absorb water through humidity in the air. People with dust mite allergies have an immune system response when they breathe in dust mite particles. Both the enzymes in their feces and their hard shells can cause allergy and asthma symptoms.



## Dust Mite Allergy SYMPTOMS

Dust mite allergy symptoms can range from minor to severe. Some people have hay-fever like symptoms and others may have breathing difficulties.

- Swollen, blue-colored skin under eyes
- Sneezing
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Postnasal drip
- Watery, red or itchy eyes
- Itchy nose, roof of mouth or throat
- Facial pain from nasal congestion
- Audible whistling or wheezing sound when exhaling
- Difficulty breathing
- Coughing, tightness in chest, shortness of breath, or wheezing



## Dust Mite Allergy DIAGNOSIS

If you suspect you have mite allergies, your allergist is here to help! They will ask you questions about medical history, symptoms and triggers. Based on this information and a physical examination of the lining of your nose, they may suggest allergy testing.



A **skin prick test** is the most common type of allergy testing. This test involves pricking your skin with a sterile device and then applying a small amount of allergen extract to your skin. Then you're monitored for swelling, redness, or other signs of a reaction. This reaction helps your allergist determine the severity of your mold allergy and can help them identify potential treatments to help relieve your symptoms. In some cases, a doctor may use a **blood test** to identify your mold allergy.

## Dust Mite Allergy TREATMENT

Your allergist can recommend a treatment plan to best address your specific condition and symptoms. This may include dust mite prevention techniques, over-the-counter medications, prescription medications, and/or allergy shots.



## Tips for Reducing Bedroom Exposure to DUST MITE ALLERGENS

Avoidance is the best way to manage your mite allergy. You can't completely eliminate dust mites from your home. But you can significantly reduce their number. Below are some tips to help you reduce your exposure.

- **Use Allergen-Proof Bed Covers**  
Keep your mattress, box spring, and pillows in dust-proof allergen blocking covers.
- **Wash Bedding Weekly**  
Wash all bedding including sheets, blankets, and bed covers in hot water that is a least 130° F to kill dust mites & allergens. If bedding can't be washed put it in the dryer for at least 15 minutes at a temp above 130° F. Freezing non-washable items for 24 hours can also kill dust mites, however it won't remove allergens. A dust-proofing product in the rinse water can help reduce lint, airborne particles, and reduce house dust mites.
- **Bedding Choices Matter**  
Use freshly washed cotton bedding, sheets, and pillow cases. Use cotton, polyester, or other synthetic fiber blankets.
- **Declutter**  
Anything that collects dust, collects mites. Remove tabletop decor, books, and magazines/newspapers from your bedroom.



## General Maintenance OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS & TIPS

- **Remove Dust**  
Use a damp or oiled mop or rag to clean up dust. This helps dust from becoming airborne and resettling.
- **Install a High-Efficiency Media Filter in Your Furnace and AC Unit**  
Look for a filter with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 11 or 12.<sup>2</sup> Leaving the fan on will create a whole house air filter. Make sure to change it every 90 days.
- **Keep Humidity Low**  
Maintain an indoor humidity level of under 50%. A dehumidifier or air conditioner can help keep humidity levels low.
- **Vacuum Regularly**  
Vacuuming carpet and upholstered furniture removes surface dust, but isn't effective at removing most dust mites and their allergens. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter to help decrease house dust emissions from the cleaner.
- **Remove Carpeting and Other Dust Mite Havens**  
Mites thrive in carpeting, especially if your carpeting is over concrete which holds moisture easily. If possible, replace wall-to-wall carpeting with tile, linoleum, or wood flooring. You may also want to replace other dust-friendly furniture in bedrooms like upholstered furniture, curtains/drapes, and horizontal blinds.



### References

1. Arbes, Samuel J., Richard D. Cohn, Ming Yin, Michael L. Mullenburg, Harriet A. Burge, Warren Friedman and Darryl C. Zeldin. "House Dust Mite Allergen in U.S. Beds: Results from the First National Survey of Lead and Allergens in Housing." *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* 111.2 (2003): 408-14.

2. *Dust mite allergy.* (n.d.)*Mayo Clinic.* Retrieved July 30, 2021 from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dust-mites/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20352178>.