



Allergies

Dust Mite Allergy

The Most Common Cause of Perennial Allergic Rhinitis

Dust mite protein, the number one indoor allergen, is the most common cause of perennial allergic rhinitis. At least 10 percent of the population suffer from dust mite allergy. Some of the symptoms associated with it include sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, nasal stuffiness, runny nose, stuffy ears, respiratory problems, atopic dermatitis and asthma.

What Are Dust Mites?

Dust mites belong to the genus *Dermatophagoides* and are in the same Arachnid family as the spider. They are so small they can not be seen with the naked eye. They are oval shaped, cream colored, eight legged creatures with sticky pads on the ends of their feet making it easy for them to burrow deep in carpet fibers and furniture. Only the dead mite particles are able to be vacuumed effectively.

They survive from eating human shed skin, finger nails, hair, pollen, fungi, bacteria and animal dander. They absorb moisture from the air and their environment. Their development and food consumption increase if the humidity is between 70-80 percent and with temperatures between 75-80 degrees. If the humidity is below 40 percent dust mites can not survive.

The cleanliness of the home or the presence of animals has nothing to do with the number of mites in a home. Their population is determined by the humidity of the home, the temperature of the home, and the amount of fabric or upholstery in the home. They do not survive on vinyl or hardwood floors but are everywhere that dust accumulates.

The dust mite population increases very rapidly. Each egg-laying female can increase the population by 25 to 30 mites every three weeks. Also each mite produces between 10 and 20 waste pellets each day. The life span of a mite is only two to three months, however.

In the United States, even though dust mite populations peak in July and August, their allergen levels stay high throughout the winter.

The dust mites themselves are not allergenic, but the proteins they produce are. It is the protein DER p1 in the fecal products and disintegrating body parts that cause the most problem.

Reducing Exposure

No matter how vigorously you dust or vacuum, you will not reduce the number of live dust mites that are present deep within carpeting and mattresses. There are, however, steps that can be taken to make their survival more difficult.

Since the dust mite loves warmth and humidity, the first step is to reduce the warm temperatures and humidity in the home. To do so, an air conditioner and dehumidifier should be used. There are special filters that can be purchased for your air conditioner to help better trap airborne allergens. The filters should be changed or cleaned frequently. The dehumidifier should be cleaned regularly.

The bedroom is the perfect haven for dust mites. They live in pillows, mattresses, bed springs, blankets, and comforters. Two million of these creatures live in the average bed. The body warmth of a human, plus the shed skin flakes are conducive for dust mite growth and survival. It is best to enclose the box springs, mattress, and pillows in airtight, dust proof covers. All bedding should also be washed weekly in hot soapy water.

The ideal home should be carpet free. But for those homes with carpets, they should be professionally cleaned with super heated steam to effectively kill dust mites. Mites do not survive in hot conditions.

The most important tool for managing dust mites droppings and body particles is the powerful high filtration vacuum cleaner. Vacuuming thoroughly the carpets, mattresses, upholstered furniture, curtains and draperies once a week will reduce the dust mite allergens in your home.

Other steps to reduce dust mite allergens are to decorate with wood, vinyl, or leather furniture. Use shades or washable curtains instead of heavy drapes. Avoid anything that tends to collect dust such as wall hangings, books, clutter, and knick-knacks.

Studies have shown that clothing is also a source of dust mite allergens. Clothing should also be washed in very hot water and dried thoroughly to kill the mites.

Anti-Mite Products

There are products on that market that claim to kill the dust mites or reduce the allergenic effects of their droppings, but often times the toxic chemicals in these products affect people worse than the mites. Always read the ingredient labels prior to purchasing to see what chemicals are

being used.

Treatment

If reducing the exposure to the mites is not effective, medications or allergy shots may be needed to help control the symptoms. Contact your physician or allergist for advice.

For more information on [dust mites](#), please refer to the collected Internet links.

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