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ALLERGY TO DUST

Dust particles float in the air. When a person who is sensitive to house dust breathes it into his or her nose and lungs, these particles can cause watery eyes, sneezing, coughing, runny nose, congestion, or wheezing. House dust is made up mostly of dust mites and their waste products (Picture 1). The dust mite is a microscopic bug that lives in furnace ducts, stuffed furniture, mattresses, box springs, pillows, rugs, rug pads, and stuffed toys. It is the waste product of the dust mite that causes allergy symptoms, not the actual dust mite. Dust mites like it warm and humid like your home in summer. But they can also be a problem in the winter when the furnace is on.

The best way to prevent house dust allergy is to remove as much dust as you can. Pay special attention to your child's bedroom.

HOW TO CLEAN AND DUSTPROOF YOUR CHILD'S ROOM

Clean your child's room while he or she is away from the house. Follow these steps:

1. Wet-mop and damp-dust the room well from top to bottom, including lights, closets, window sills, shelves, ceiling fans, blinds, and molding. Do this twice a week.
2. Clean all furniture well before you put it back.
3. If the room is carpeted, a dust mite allergy control solution may be put on the carpeting to reduce dust mite exposure. Look for this solution in the grocery store or hardware store. Vacuum two times per week. Use double filter bags in the vacuum. It is best to have low pile or no carpet.



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

FURNISHINGS

- **Bed** - Beds in your child's room should have wooden or metal frames. Do not use a couch, sofa, or sleeper sofa.
- **Mattress** - Place the mattress in a vinyl (soft plastic) cover with a zipper. Box springs must also have vinyl covers.
- **Pillows** - **Do not** use kapok, feather, down, or foam pillows. Mold grows on foam rubber when it gets old. Pillow covers may also be used.
- **Blankets** - Do not use a comforter, quilt, or chenille bedspread on the bed. Use only cotton, rayon, or synthetic fiber blankets. Wash bedding every week.
- **Rugs** - Small, washable cotton rugs may be used if they are washed weekly. If you use a rug pad, be sure it is made of rubber. Avoid carpeting or wool rugs.
- **Furnishings** - Remove all upholstered ("stuffed") furniture. Remove window drapes, wall hangings, stuffed toys, and dust-catching ornaments from the bedroom.
- **Closet** - The closet should contain only your child's clothing. Remove everything else. The closet should be as dust-free as the room.
- **Doors** - The doors to the bedroom and closet should stay closed.

FURNISHINGS (continued)

- **Windows** - Do not use Venetian blinds or mini-blinds. Use curtains or shades that can be washed often.
- **Furnace and air conditioning** - Cover all heating and air conditioning vents in the room with 10 thicknesses of cheesecloth. You can find cheesecloth in hardware or grocery stores. This will catch dust in the furnace air. Change the cheesecloth when you can see dust. Change the furnace filter at least once a month. Clean vents and ducts once a year. Dust and pollen collect in vents when the furnace is not in use. The child with asthma should leave the house the first time the furnace or air conditioner is turned on.

THE FAMILY CAR

Follow these tips to make the car dust free:

- Before winter, turn on the car's heater (with the car doors open) to clean out the heating system. Vacuum the heating outlets.
- Wash and vacuum the inside of the car often.
- Do not let anyone smoke in the car.

MORE TIPS

- **Sleeping and napping** - Your child should nap or sleep only in his own bed which has been prepared as directed. If your child must stay in bed because of illness, do not give him extra feather or kapok pillows. When your child visits or travels, he should take his non-allergenic pillow with him.
- **Other rooms** - If the child plays or spends time in a room other than his bedroom, it must also be as dust-free as possible. Try not to let your child lie on carpeted floors or sit or lie on overstuffed furniture. Use a wooden or plastic chair if possible.
- **Playing** - Do not let your child jump on furniture or beds, or wrestle on carpeted floors. Keep him from playing in dusty areas.
- **Cleaning** - Don't clean fireplaces or the furnace when the child is around. Clean the blades of ceiling fans weekly. Clean in back of the refrigerator and under the hood of the stove.
- **Chalk dust** - Your child should avoid chalk dust.
- **Dusty objects** - Your child should not handle objects that are covered with dust, such as books or boxes of clothing if they have been stored in shelves or cupboards for a long time.
- **Attics or closets** - Your child should stay away from attics and closets.
- **Smoking** - Family and friends should not smoke inside the home.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse, or call _____.

Picture 2 Ways to keep your child's room free of dust.

