

Allergy & Asthma Center

of Southern Oregon, PC

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL INFORMATION

Avoiding substances to which you are allergic (“allergens”) can help decrease symptoms of allergies, asthma, and eczema symptoms.

DUST MITES

Dust mites are extremely small insects (microscopic, cannot see without magnification). These harmless insects only cause problems when someone becomes allergic to them. Insects and their dropping are concentrated where dust collects; windows, carpets, floors, upholstered furniture, and bedding/beds. Measures used to decrease dust mite allergen in the home can take months before the benefit is seen.

Decreasing dust mite allergen exposure can lead to improvement, however it will not be immediate. Sometimes it can take months before seeing the benefit!

1. Bedroom - this is a major location of exposure both because we spend so much time here and are so close to materials on/in our bed.

- Cover mattress with plastic or fine woven fabric (mission allergy, national allergy)
 - cover pillows and comforters with fine woven fabric (plastic can increase sweating here, but can be minimized by covering with a washable fabric cover):
 - Mattress pads, sheets and all blankets should be suitable for washing every 1-2 weeks
 - Wash all bedding every 1-2 weeks. Be sure to use a dryer which kills and eliminates the mites.
- Remove carpet if possible; decrease upholstered furniture, drapes, clothing, etc.
- Room air cleaner; best to use HEPA filter placed on polished floor

2. Whole House

- Decrease to 45% relative humidity or less (in normal temperature)
 - Evaporative coolers are NOT recommended
- Ventilate house at times when there is low outside humidity
- Choose a house with 2nd floor bedrooms
- Avoid concrete slabs except in the basement and certainly avoid fitted carpets on a concrete slab

3. Beyond the bedroom

- Carpets should be area rugs if possible; ideally they should be cleaned or put out in the sun and beaten
- Vacuum carpets twice weekly. Use a vacuum with a HEPA air filter if possible.
- Avoid upholstered furniture as much as possible and reduce clutter to facilitate cleaning

POLLEN AVOIDANCE

Reduce your exposure:

1. Keep windows closed during pollen season.
2. Know which pollens you are sensitive to and check pollen counts. Avoid outdoor activities on high pollen days.
3. Stay indoors on dry, windy days. The best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
4. Remove clothes you've worn outside.

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5. Shower and wash hair to rinse pollen from your skin/hair after working/being outdoors.
6. Don't hang laundry outside where pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
7. Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
8. Wear glasses or sunglasses when outdoors to minimize the amount of pollen getting into your eyes.
9. Use your HVAC (Heating, vacuuming, and air conditioning) system. Change your air filter regularly. Use a filter rated for pollens/allergens.
10. Use an indoor air purifier. HEPA air purifiers have been shown to decrease allergens indoors.
11. Vacuum often with a HEPA air filter vacuum

For more in-depth tips:

Mayo website (search their website for “allergy-proof your home”: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/allergies/in-depth/allergy/art-20049365>

<https://www.aaaai.org/tools-for-the-public/conditions-library/allergies/cleaning-tips-for-allergy-and-asthma-sufferers>

MOLD CONTROL

Avoiding exposure to the allergen is the best way to manage your symptoms.

1. Stay indoors on days when mold counts are high.
2. Keep track of mold and pollen counts in your area.
3. Keep away from uncut fields and avoid raking leaves.
4. Take a shower after coming indoors. This will wash out mold spores in your hair to keep them from bothering you all night long.
5. Eliminate mold from your home by fixing leaking faucets and pipes.
6. Reduce the humidity in your home. Be sure your indoor humidity stays below 60 percent.
7. Remove basement carpeting and replace with linoleum or concrete flooring that will not retain moisture.
8. Clean mold off walls using a vinegar solution.

For more information on home cleaning and remedies try visiting these websites:

<https://www.epa.gov/mold/mold-cleanup-your-home>

<https://www.epa.gov/mold/brief-guide-mold-moisture-and-your-home#tab-7>

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