

Allergen Avoidance

Avoidance measures can be useful in the management of patients with allergy. Below are some avoidance measures for dust, animal dander, mold, and pollen.

Pollen

- Monitor pollen forecasts.
- If pollen counts are high, try to remain indoors or at least limit outdoor trips to rural areas.
- Keep windows closed and run air conditioners when indoors (especially important in the mornings when pollen is being released).
- Keep windows rolled up in car.
- Avoid lawn mowing or leaf raking—use a mask if absolutely necessary.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses or goggles, if possible, when outdoors.

Dust

The most important component of house dust to which patients may become allergic is the dust mite. These microscopic arachnids can cause allergic rhinitis, conjunctivitis, asthma episodes, and atopic dermatitis. Dust mites live primarily in mattresses, pillows, blankets, carpets, curtains, and upholstered furniture. Waste product particles produced by these mites are the main component of house dust. The following steps can be taken to reduce dust mite allergen levels:

- Use allergy-proof casings on all mattresses and pillows.
- Every 7 to 14 days, wash everything on the bed (eg, comforters, blankets, pillows) in hot water (130°F).
- Comforters that cannot be washed should be covered in an allergy-proof casing and dry cleaned (a process that kills mites).
- If possible, remove all carpeting in the bedrooms. If not possible, treat them every 4 to 6 months with a product such as Acarosan® (active ingredient benzyl-benzoate) that works to reduce the number of dust mites in carpets, thus leading to a decrease in allergen levels.
- Remove all carpeting on concrete floors. Such floors tend to trap moisture and promote mite and mold growth. Carpets should be removed and the concrete covered with a vapor barrier and washable floor covering such as vinyl or linoleum.
- Wash children's stuffed toys as frequently as bedding; store in plastic bags or freezer when not in use.
- Indoor humidity should be kept at less than 50%; dust mites thrive in high humidity. Monitor the humidity and use a dehumidifier if necessary.

Animal Dander

If house pets have been or are currently present in the home, house dust will contain large amounts of animal dander.

When pets have been recently removed from the home, patients with allergies should follow these steps:

- Vacuum up any pet hair and wash all walls and floors.
- Steam clean all carpets and upholstery, but assure rapid drying by running heat or air conditioning system. Dampness promotes mite and mold growth.
- Wash all bedding and draperies even if the pet was in direct contact with them.

If pets are still in the home, the following should be accomplished:

- Keep pets out of bedrooms at all times.
- Keep pets outdoors as much as possible.
- Put pets in another room (airborne allergen levels increase 100-fold when pets are in the same room).
- Remove carpeting from the entire house, if possible. Start by removing bedroom carpeting because it traps pet allergens.
- Use the same precautions with mattresses and pillows as described for dust mites.
- Use a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) cleaner to remove airborne allergens. Use one in the bedroom and consider using another one in the room in which you spend the most time.
- Use HEPA central furnace filters to prevent spread of the airborne dander throughout the house.
- Open the windows and ventilate the house; air exchange can decrease airborne pet allergens.
- Wash pets weekly to remove surface allergens. Any bedding should also be washed weekly.

Mold

Airborne mold spores, more prevalent than pollen grain, produce allergic symptoms indoors and out. The following steps can be taken to avoid mold exposure:

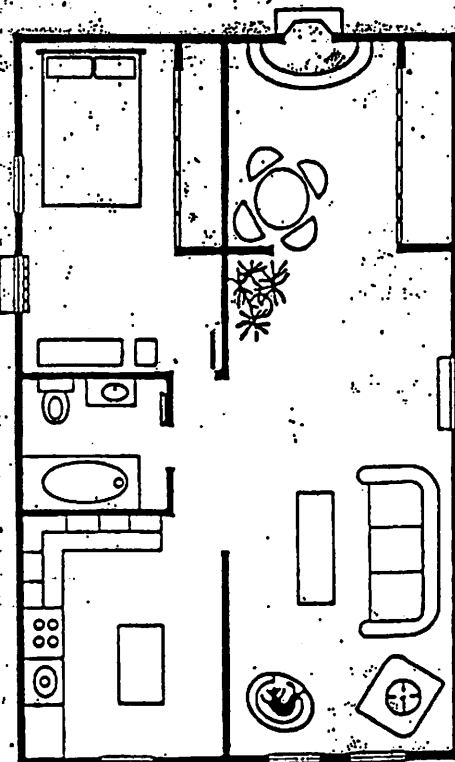
- Avoid exposure to damp basements, compost piles, fallen leaves, cut grass, barns, and wooded areas—areas of high mold growth (wear a face mask if such exposures are unavoidable).
- Prevent high levels of humidity indoors. Measure the indoor humidity with a gauge and keep it at 35% or less. This can be accomplished with air conditioners in the summer and preventing over-humidification in the winter.
- Remove humidity produced by showering or cooking with an exhaust fan. Mold growth can be prevented indoors by products that kill mildew, eg, diluted bleach.
- If using a humidifier, clean it occasionally with a bleach solution and change the water frequently.



Controlling Allergens in the Home

Bedrooms:

- Remove rugs, if possible, and keep floors clean.
- If rugs cannot be removed, follow this procedure weekly: Apply benzyl benzoate moist powder or 3% tannic acid, then vacuum using a cleaner with an effective filtration system.
- Persons with asthma should wear a mask while vacuuming or dusting.
- Remove dust collectors such as stuffed toys, books, magazines, and miscellaneous clutter.
- Use an air conditioner—not an open window with a fan in it—in warm weather.
- Encase mattresses and pillows in plastic or an impermeable fabric.
- Use pillows stuffed with synthetic fabric.
- Wash all bedding—sheets, pillow cases, blankets, comforters, and mattress pads—in 130°F (55°C) water at least once every 10 days.
- Keep pets out of bedrooms at all times.



Heating, cooling, and filtering systems:

- Use air conditioning when appropriate to keep pollen outdoors and to lower humidity.
- Clean or replace air conditioner and furnace filters regularly.
- Place portable high-energy particulate air (HEPA) filters only on clean, bare floors (never on rugs).

Pets:

- Find a new home for cats, dogs, and pet rodents, or keep them outdoors.
- If pets cannot be relocated:
 - Never sleep with pets or allow them into the bedroom.
 - Remove carpets, if possible, and keep floors clean.
 - Minimize upholstered furniture.
 - Vacuum clean with a high-efficiency filter.
 - Filter air (as described under "Heating, cooling, and filtering systems").
 - Wash cats and dogs weekly.

Kitchens, baths, and damp areas:

- Ventilate adequately and clean frequently with chlorine bleach.
- Do not use carpeting in perennially damp areas.
- Do not carpet concrete-slab basements.
- Consider using a dehumidifier, with the humidity level set between 25% and 50%, in a damp basement. Clean and empty the dehumidifier regularly.
- Clean tiles and grout frequently.
- Clean regularly under sinks and behind toilets.
- Use insecticides to kill cockroaches.

Other living areas:

- Remove rugs or vacuum weekly (as described under "Bedrooms").
- Replace upholstered furniture, if possible.
- Do not sleep or lie down on upholstered furniture.
- Arrange furniture so that it can be easily dusted.
- When dusting, use a damp cloth to avoid simply stirring up dust.
- Choose synthetic fibers instead of natural fibers for curtains. Better yet, use blinds that can be washed.
- Make sure that mold doesn't begin growing on house plants or dried arrangements.

Irritants:

- Avoid strong odors and other irritants in the home such as:
- Tobacco smoke.
 - Wood smoke.
 - Strong perfumes, talcum powder, hair sprays, cleaning products.
 - Paint fumes.
 - Strong cooking odors, especially from frying.

1-800-422-Dust
for allergy control products

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