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## **PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET**

### **DUST MITE ALLERGEN AVOIDANCE**

This leaflet is designed for people whose dust mite allergy has been confirmed using blood or skin-prick tests. Advice regarding other treatments will be given in clinic.

House dust mite allergy is relatively common especially in the UK and can cause rhinitis (inflammation of the nasal lining resulting in a blocked, runny nose), asthma or eczema. If you are allergic to house dust mites, reducing exposure will reduce symptoms and the need for medication.

#### **What are house dust mites and where are they found?**

House dust mites are invisible to the naked eye and found in everyone's home, particularly the bedroom, in mattresses and bedding, despite normal cleaning. They can also be found in carpets, upholstery, chairs, curtains etc.

#### **How you can reduce the number of mites in the house**

It is essential to lower the levels of mites significantly to reduce symptoms. A slight reduction will have no effect as house dust mites keep breeding and multiplying. Therefore, you must persist with the measures stated below. Concentrate on the bedroom area, as more mites are found there. It is best to employ as many of the measures as possible, thoroughly and repeatedly, otherwise they are not effective.

### **BEDROOM**

#### **1. Barrier mattress bedding covers**

This is the single most effective measure; it is made of special fabric which is impermeable to house dust mites. If the mattress cover is used there is no need to vacuum the mattress. It forms a barrier between you and the house dust mite. These covers allow water/body moisture to pass through them and are more comfortable than plastic mattress covers.

Many anti-allergy mattress covers available are not effective. The following make has been shown to exclude house dust mites:

"Alprotec" by mail order from Advanced Allergy Technologies Ltd.  
Telephone: 0161 998 1999, email: [allergy@allergy.uk.com](mailto:allergy@allergy.uk.com)

A cheaper option is to cover the mattress with a plastic cover. These may be obtained from:

As air cannot pass through the plastic covers they can be hot. This could be a problem if you have eczema. They can also pose a threat of suffocation to infants and children. Therefore, it is better to choose an air-permeable cover for duvets and pillows.

## 2. A clean bed

If you do not have bedding covers:

- **Vacuum the mattress** once a week, paying particular attention to the area around the buttons. Arachicide sprays are not recommended, as they are of limited help and may be an irritant.  
**Please note:** Do not do the vacuuming if you have an allergy to dust mites. You should stay out of the bedroom while the bed is being stripped, staying out for at least half an hour after the bed is remade.
- **Hot wash all bedding** on a 60 degree cycle every four to six months. This includes pillows, quilts, blankets, duvets, (try to select materials which allow this). If a hot wash is not possible, dry-clean them. A cooler wash will be less effective in reducing house dust mite numbers.
- An alternative to washing **pillows** is to **freeze** them. Place them in the deep freeze for eight hours every month. This kills the house dust mite.
- Padded bed heads should be removed; the house dust mite will live in it.

## 3. Childrens' bedrooms

If they have bunk beds, the child with the allergy should be on the top bed.

Soft toys kept on the bed will contain house dust mite. Keep these to a minimum. Wash or freeze them at least once a month. You do not need to deprive a child of a favourite night time toy.

## 4. General tips

- For those with a severe allergy, have vinyl or wood floors instead of fitted carpets in the bedroom.
- Avoid heavy curtains. Use lightweight washable curtains or blinds that can be easily washed and cleaned.
- Hoover at least once a week.
- Damp dust the room at least once a week.
- If you have the allergy and do the vacuuming, cleaners which do not blow out dust may be helpful.

## OTHER ROOMS

Thorough vacuuming (carpets, sofas, upholstered chairs etc) and damp dusting will help. Avoid heavy upholstery and curtains as above, so that they can be washed/cleaned easily.