

# HOUSE DUST ALLERGY

**Allergy to house dust is an important cause of allergic symptoms. Decreasing one's exposure to house dust can decrease or eliminate these symptoms. These instructions will tell you how.**

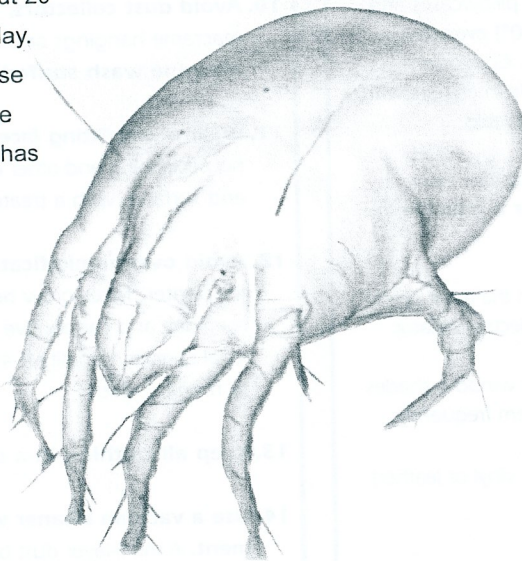
## What is house dust?

Although there are many components in house dust to which people may be allergic, the most important is the dust mite. This is a microscopic, insect-like creature which is found in homes. It lives primarily in pillows, mattresses, carpets and upholstered furniture, and thrives in humid and warm conditions. Its diet consists of shed scales from human skin. Waste product particles produced by these mites are the main substances in house dust to which allergic people react. Each mite produces about 20 of these waste particles every day. These particles continue to cause allergic symptoms even after the mite which has produced them has died.

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## Where do dust mites live?

The greatest source of dust mite exposure in the home is the bedroom mattress and pillow, which provide the best conditions of warmth, humidity and food for their growth. They are also present in blankets, carpets, upholstered furniture, curtains and similar fabrics. Female mites can lay 25 to 50 eggs, with a new generation produced every three weeks. It is easy to see why bedding contains large numbers of living and dead dust mites.

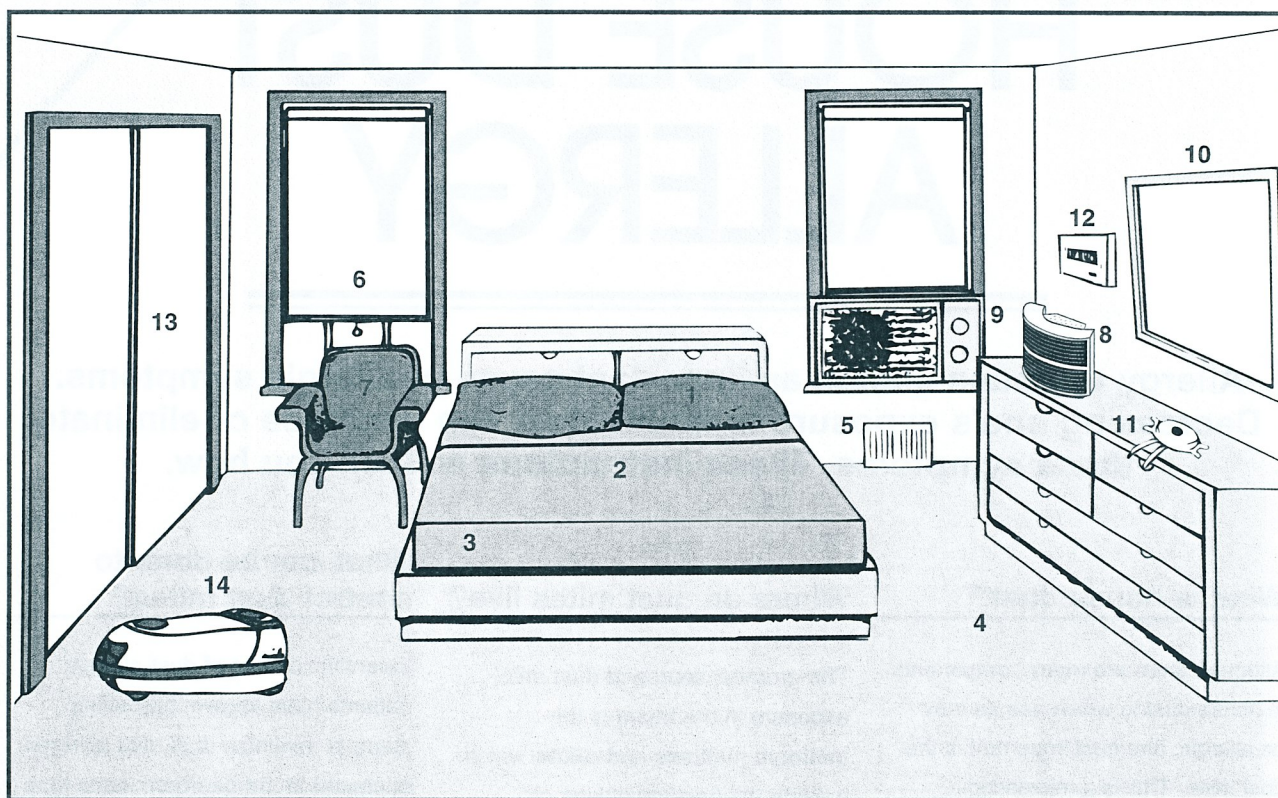


## What can be done to control dust mites?

Scientific studies of dust-allergic patients have shown that taking steps to minimize dust mite allergen exposure in the bedroom leads to a decrease in allergic symptoms and a decrease in medication requirements. Emphasis is placed on the bedroom, since people spend one third or more of each 24 hours there, and because it is the room with the greatest number of dust mites. The mattress, pillows and box spring should be encased in zippered allergen-impermeable covers, and other bedding washed in hot water. Other important dust control measures are noted on the following pages.

*Scanning Electron Micrograph  
of the House Dust Mite  
Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus*  
Photo © Allergy Control Products Inc.

# DUST CONTROL IN THE BEDROOM



- 1. Encase the pillows** in zippered, allergen-impermeable covers, or wash pillows in hot water every two weeks. Covers such as Allergy Control Covers which permit perspiration vapor transmission will be most comfortable.
- 2. Encase the mattress and box spring** in zippered, allergen-impermeable encasings. If there is more than one bed in the room, all should be encased. Covers such as Allergy Control Covers which permit perspiration vapor transmission will be most comfortable.
- 3. Wash all bedding** – blankets, sheets, pillowcases and mattress pad if used – in hot water (130°) every two weeks. Avoid wool and down blankets. Comforters can be encased in allergen-impermeable interliners with decorative cover or washed every two weeks.
- 4. Remove all carpeting.** If this is not possible, apply a solution to **inactivate allergen and/or a miticide** to kill dust mites.
- 5. Cover hot air vents** with filters to clean the air at point-of-entry, or close the vents and use an electric radiator.
- 6. Avoid heavy curtains** and blinds. Use window shades instead. If curtains are used, launder them frequently.
- 7. Use wipeable furniture** (wood, plastic, vinyl or leather) in place of upholstered furniture.

- 8. H.E.P.A. air cleaners** can remove airborne allergen particles. Be sure to choose the appropriate model for your room size. Air cleaners should not be placed where their exhaust can disturb settled dust from carpets and nearby furnishings.
- 9. Use air conditioners** to prevent the high heat and humidity which stimulate mite growth. Special **filters** can be added to help trap the airborne allergens. Use a **dehumidifier** to help reduce humidity levels.
- 10. Avoid dust collectors**, such as wall pennants, macrame hangings and throw pillows. **Remove or machine wash stuffed toys.**
- 11. Wear a well fitting face mask** when doing housecleaning and other chores. Clean drawers, closets and surfaces with a treated cloth.
- 12. Avoid over-humidification** if using a humidifier in the winter. Mites grow best at 75-80% relative humidity and cannot live at under 50% humidity. The ideal relative humidity is 40-50%. Use a humidity gauge to monitor levels.
- 13. Keep all clothing in a closet**, with the door shut.
- 14. Use a vacuum cleaner with high allergen containment.** A multi-layer dust bag and exhaust filter will reduce escape of allergen.