

FAIRFIELD COUNTY ALLERGY, ASTHMA & IMMUNOLOGY ASSOCIATES, P.C.

ADULT AND PEDIATRIC ALLERGY, ASTHMA AND CLINICAL IMMUNOLOGY

DIPLOMATES OF THE AMERICAN BOARD OF ALLERGY & IMMUNOLOGY

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Allergen Avoidance

Avoidance measures can be useful in the management of patients with allergies. Below are some avoidance measures for dust mites, pets, mold, and pollen.

Pollen

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

Dust Mites

The most important component of house dust 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, and upholstered furniture. Waste product particles (feces) 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, box springs, comforters and pillows.
- Every 7-14 days wash everything not encased on the bed (e.g., comforters, blankets, pillows) in hot water (130°F).
- Comforters that cannot be washed should be covered in an allergy-proof casing.
- 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 floor should be covered with a vapor barrier and a washable floor covering such as vinyl or linoleum.
- Wash or freeze a child'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.

Pets

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 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.

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 pet bedding should also be washed weekly.

Mold

Airborne mold spores, more prevalent than pollen grains, 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- all 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, e.g., diluted bleach.
- If using a humidifier clean it occasionally with a bleach solution and change the water frequently.