

Clean Indoor Air

Tip Sheet #5

Dust Mites



Helpful websites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov>
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): <http://www.epa.gov/iaq>
- Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC): <http://www.cpsc.gov>
- Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC): <http://ahfc.state.ak.us/>

Dust mites are tiny microscopic animals related to ticks and spiders that live in virtually every home. Dust mites feed on skin flakes and can be found throughout the home, including mattresses, pillows, carpets, and furniture. These creatures produce airborne particles (allergens) that can trigger allergic reactions or asthma episodes when inhaled by children or adults who are sensitive to them. The higher level of mite allergens in the home, the greater the risk to children living in the home.

Control Dust Mites

Here are some steps you can take to control dust mites in your home:

- Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner in summer to maintain the relative humidity in your home at 50 percent or below. Reducing moisture in your home is the single most effective control for dust mites – they thrive in moist air.
- Encase your mattress and pillows in dust-proof or allergen impermeable covers (available from specialty supply mail order companies, bedding and some department stores). Dust mite levels in mattresses are more closely linked with asthma attacks than dust mites on the floor.
- Wash all bedding and blankets once a week in hot water (at least 130 - 140°F) to kill dust mites.
- Replace wool or feather-stuffed bedding materials with synthetic materials.
- Select stuffed animals and toys that are washable.
- If possible, replace wall-to-wall carpets in bedrooms with hard surface (linoleum, tile or wood) floors.
- Use a damp mop or rag to remove dust. Never use a dry cloth since this just stirs up mite allergens.
- Use a vacuum cleaner with either a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA filter to trap allergens that pass through a vacuum's exhaust.



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These guidelines are for use in maintaining or renovating your home with the goal of improving the quality of the air you breathe indoors. This project is funded by Alaska Housing Finance Corporation. American Lung Association of Alaska and Alaska Housing Finance Corporation are not to be held liable and do not make any guarantees regarding the outcome of consumer implementation of these guidelines. "Healthy Breathing Begins at Home" guidelines are not intended to be construed as medical advice or replace the consultation of a physician or specialist in any way. For answers to lung health questions, you can speak directly with a registered nurse or respiratory therapist at no charge by calling the American Lung Association Call Center at 1-800-LUNGUSA.

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