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The Royal Liverpool  
and Broadgreen  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

## Patient information

### House Dust Mite Allergy

#### Ear Nose and Throat Speciality

The house dust mite is a tiny creature approximately 0.3 mm. It feeds on human skin scales, feathers and wool. It is the mite droppings and dead mites that cause most of the symptoms when they are inhaled.

#### Symptoms of house dust mite allergy

The symptoms are present all the year round. They may include sneezing, an itchy, blocked or runny nose. Your eyes and throat may also be affected.

The doctor may confirm diagnosis with a blood test.

#### Where is the dust mite found?

The mites need a warm moist environment to survive, and is found mainly in the bedroom, in the bed (sheets, pillows duvets and mattress). It also lives in carpets and curtains.

**It is impossible to rid your home of house dust mites but there are several things you can do that will help control the levels found.**

As the house dust mite is found mainly in the bed and bedroom, particular attention should be paid to flooring, furnishing and cleaning methods there.

Do not make the bed; throw back the bedclothes to allow them to be aired during the day.

#### The bedroom

- Keep surfaces free of clutter, i.e. no papers and books.
- Consider replacing carpets with solid floors, i.e. laminate.
- **Damp dust** surfaces and woodwork frequently.
- **Vacuum regularly** with a heap filter vacuum cleaner. The floor under the bed and the curtains.
- Do not leave clothes lying around; put them away in the draws or wardrobe. Never hang your dressing gown on the back of the door.
- Do not have soft toys in the bedroom
- Keep pets out of the bedroom i.e. dogs, cats birds, hamsters or fish.
- Curtains should be lightweight and washed frequently. Avoid having net curtains.
- Do not have upholstered chairs in the bedroom
- Do not have plants or flowers in the bedroom.
- Keep the room in good structural order and repair any signs of damp.
- Keep the room as dry as possible and ensure it is well ventilated by opening the bedroom windows, even in winter.

## **The bed**

- Use synthetic pillows and bedding with dust proof covers.
- Wash bedding at least weekly on a hot wash (56 – 60<sup>o</sup>) C and line dry in the sunshine if possible.
- Vacuum the base, the mattress between the sheets and both sides of pillows and duvets.
- Air bedding regularly on the line in the sunshine if possible.

## **Treatment**

The doctor may prescribe a nasal spray or antihistamines. If possible, anyone suffering from dust mite allergy should avoid making the bed or dusting or take anti-histamine if appropriate.

**Please do not become obsessed about avoidance or cleaning, as you will never remove all the house dust mites. Try to lead as normal a life as possible.**

## **Further information**

**Please speak to your hospital doctor, your clinic nurse, your family doctor (GP)**

**Ear Nose and Throat Clinic**

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