How Dust Mites Can Affect Your Asthma

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Asthma and Dust Mites

Dust mites are little creatures that can have a significant impact on your symptoms – whether you suffer from asthma, allergies or both.

Luckily, learning more about asthma and dust mites can help you to limit your exposure to them, and therefore limit the aggravation of your condition.

About Dust Mites

You can't see dust mites with the naked eye, as they are teeny tiny bugs, almost spider-like, measuring less than 1/3-1/4 of a millimeter.

They live a few months, and the life cycle includes two stages: egg and adult. One female can lay as many as 100 eggs during her life.

Mites love humid, warm weather (thriving best at temperatures between 68 and 77F) and some species are specifically adapted to live in your home environment.

Their favourite meals are skin cells, the tiny flakes that we shed every day. An adult can shed over one gram of skin daily, which is enough to feed one million dust mites. If you have pets in your home the dust mites will love them, as they can feed on your pet's skin cells, too.

These skin flakes end up in your furniture, carpets, bed sheets and stuffed toys, so these are the places where dust mites are found in the greatest numbers.

Dust Mite Allergies

It is not the dust mite itself but its waste products that cause an allergic reaction. That allergic reaction will cause symptoms like aggravation of your breathing problems, sneezing, watery eyes or runny nose.

Dust mites die when exposed to dry or extreme temperatures, but their waste products can continue to cause problems.

Limit Your Exposure to Dust Mite

It is impossible to completely eliminate dust mites, but you can take a few easy steps to significantly decrease your exposure to them.

Since most of your home's dust mites are hiding in the bedroom, this room should be the first to be cleaned up.

Vacuuming your bedroom will removes just a small percentage of the dust mites living there, but it’s a good start.

The most important thing to do is to cover your mattresses and pillows with special zippered dust-proof covers. These covers have very little pores that don’t allow dust mites to get inside or leave their waste products.

Wash your bed sheets and blankets every week in hot water to further eliminate the mites (as they are killed at temperatures above 130F). Wash your rugs with hot water, too, if possible.

Avoid having in your bedroom materials that provide mites a favourable place to live, like carpets, blinds, wool blankets or down-filled covers and pillows.

Replace curtains with roll-type shades. You should also keep your pet outside your bedroom and get rid of stuffed toys or other items that may collect dust. Use the same steps to clean the rest of your home.

Additionally, keep your air clean with a HEPA filter with a MEVR rating of 11-12 in your heating/air conditioning unit. Make sure you change the filter periodically. Keep the humidity in your home below 55 by using a dehumidifier or /and air conditioner.