

DUST MITES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What Are Dust Mites?

Dust mites are microscopic eight-legged creatures invisible to the naked eye. These tiny organisms:

- Live in household dust, particularly in warm, humid environments
- Feed on shed human skin cells, animal dander, and other organic particles
- Complete their life cycle in about one month
- Can produce up to 20 waste particles per day (the primary allergen)

How They Cause Allergies

When you have a dust mite allergy, your immune system mistakes these harmless particles for threats. Your body produces immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies, which trigger the release of histamine, causing allergic reactions.

Common Symptoms

- Itchy, watery eyes
- Sneezing and runny nose
- Nasal congestion
- Inflamed or infected eczema
- Asthma symptoms

Controlling Dust Mites

While complete elimination is virtually impossible, you can significantly reduce dust mite populations by targeting their preferred environments.

Kill Existing Mites

Heat and humidity control are your best weapons:

- 1. Hot washing** – Wash bedding, pillows, and curtains weekly in hot water (above 60°C)
- 2. Use eucalyptus oil based products** – which are clinically proven to reduce dust mite. (www.bositos.com.au)

- 3. Sunlight exposure** – Place mattresses and furniture in direct sunlight for several hours monthly. Avoid hanging sheets outside if you have grass pollen allergies.
- 4. Reduced humidity** – Use dehumidifiers or air conditioners to keep humidity below 50%

Prevention Strategies

Make your home less hospitable to dust mites:

1. Bedding protection

- Use allergen-proof mattress and pillow covers (www.allergend.com.au)
- Choose bedding materials that withstand frequent washing
- Avoid sheepskins and woolen underlays

2. Household cleaning

- Vacuum carpets, mattresses, and furniture weekly with a HEPA filter vacuum
- Wipe surfaces with a damp cloth to prevent dust from becoming airborne
- Keep surfaces uncluttered and dust-free

3. Flooring choices

- Consider hard flooring (wood, tile, vinyl) instead of carpeting
- Use washable area rugs instead of wall-to-wall carpeting

4. Furniture selection

- Choose easy-to-clean furniture over heavily upholstered pieces
- Leather or vinyl upholstery harbors fewer mites than fabric

Treatment Options

When prevention isn't enough:

1. Medications

- Antihistamines to reduce allergic reactions
- Nasal corticosteroids to decrease inflammation eg. Nasonex, Dymista
- Bronchodilators like salbutamol for asthma symptoms

2. Immunotherapy

- Sublingual drops or injections containing small amounts of dust mite extract
- Gradually builds tolerance to dust mite allergens
- May significantly reduce symptoms over time
- Usually 2-3 year course with 60-70% success rate

3. Surgical Options

- Inferior Turbinoplasty to decrease nasal obstruction. Watch the video on our website. <https://hillsent.com.au/children/childrens-blocked-nose-adenoidsallergy/>
- Polyp removal when allergies contribute to polyp formation
- Endoscopic sinus surgery
- Procedures typically performed as day surgery with minimal recovery time

When to See a Specialist

Consult your ENT surgeon if:

- Your symptoms persist despite environmental controls
- Allergies significantly impact your quality of life
- You're interested in surgical options if medical options are not working.