

Living Better with Allergies

The “dirt” on dust mites:

About 25% North Americans are allergic to them, they are microscopic, and live mostly indoors, particularly in your bedroom linens, mattress, pillows, sofas, curtains and carpet. At night, when you are asleep they enjoy a happy meal. Dust mites, love warm and humid environments and love to eat miniscule flakes of human skin and animal dander. The bedroom is where you will find them in highest quantities, because it has the perfect living conditions for them to survive. Most of us spend about 30% of the day in the bedroom which is the perfect environment for them, as you toss and turn in the bed you are shedding away dead skin which is providing an endless amount of meals for these eight-legged creatures to eat. Since summer is their favorite season to reproduce- these arachnids (cousins to the spider), peak in the fall, which is why most patients who are allergic to dust mites have symptoms during this time. Humans, are allergic to dust mite poop protein, and these critters poop a lot, about 20 times a day. The poop pellet is the perfect minute size for it to be aerosolized into our airways and produce an allergic inflammation in the atopic patient.

Since dust mite allergies are so common, there are various ways to attack these allergens, one of them is through adequate dust mite avoidance strategies, such as encasing your pillows and mattress, and duvet in mite-proof covers, vacuuming once a week with a HEPA filter, and maintaining your home at a humidity level below 60 percent (ideally between 40 and 50). It is important not to use a humidifier, particularly in the winter as this can make your allergy symptoms worse, as it will increase the dust mite counts even more. For medical therapies a second-generation anti-histamine and a topical nasal corticosteroid can help minimize symptoms. Ultimately, if you want cure of your dust mite allergy, we can help you with allergy shots. You would need to come for skin testing five days after discontinuing a long acting antihistamine like cetirizine or fexofenadine. For more tricks and tips, come visit us at The Asthma and Allergy Clinic of Dr. Sweeney and Palacios-Kibler.