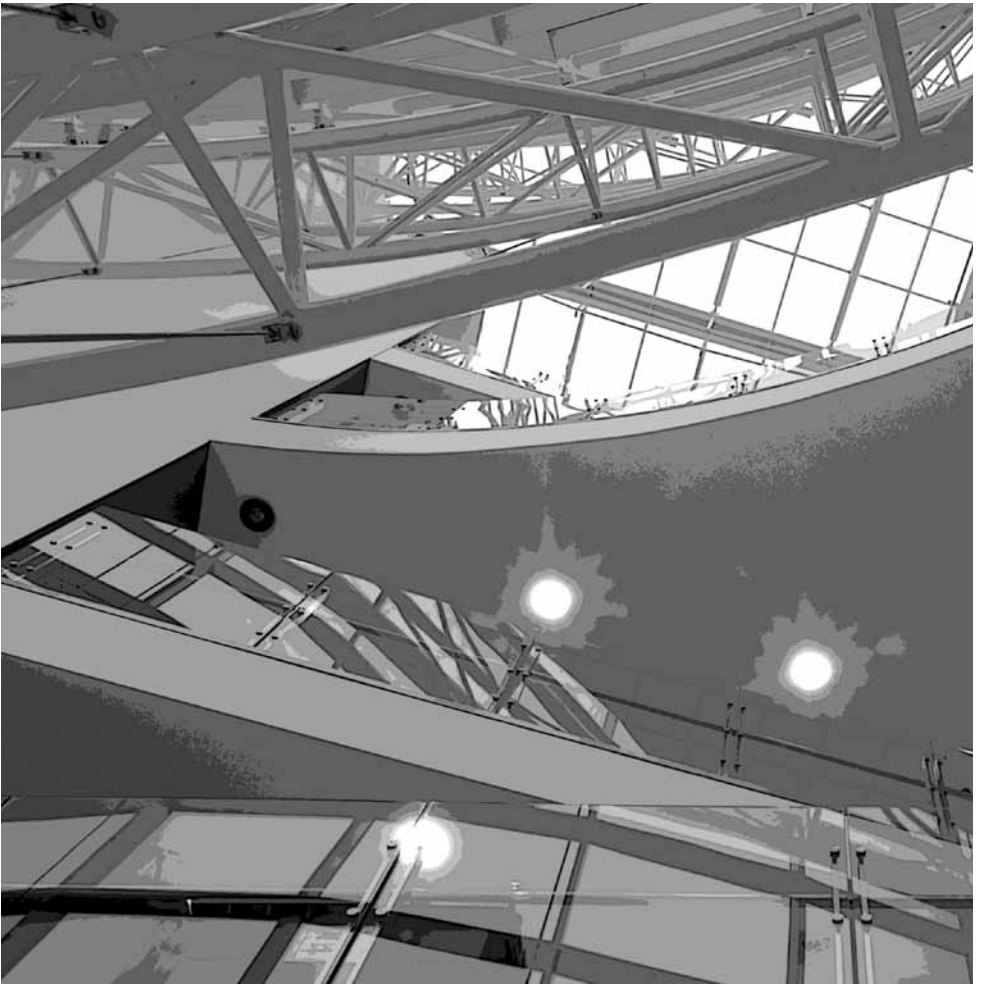


ENT Outpatients, The West Wing

Allergy Advice - House dust mites

Information for patients



Allergy to house dust mites

The skin prick test has shown you have an allergy to house dust mites. This leaflet gives you a little more information about dust mites and some things you can do to help control your symptoms.

What are dust mites?

They are microscopic creatures that feed on our dead skin cells. They are found in every house, particularly in beds, and in places where dust collects, such as under beds. The dust mite loves anywhere that is warm and slightly moist.

What happens when you are allergic to dust mites?

It is not the mites themselves that cause an allergic reaction, but the proteins in their droppings. When these are breathed in or touch the skin, your immune system reacts abnormally by causing the body to release a chemical called histamine. This leads to swelling and irritation in the nose, eyes, throat and lungs. This is called rhinitis. The tendency toward allergic reactions is often, but not always, hereditary (passed on genetically from parents to children).

People who have a reaction to the house dust mite are likely to have some or all of the following symptoms. They are likely to suffer all year round but may be worse at certain times of the year, depending on the humidity.

- A blocked and/or runny nose
- Sneezing
- Coughing

- Itching (throat, nose, eyes)
- Wheezing
- Loss of sense of smell

How can I reduce my exposure to house dust mites?

Whilst it is not possible to completely get rid of dust mites from your home, you can make them very unwelcome. The following suggestions will help.

- Replace feather and down pillows with synthetic ones.
- Buy duvets, pillows and mattresses that have built-in protection against dust mites, or buy dust mite proof covers for these.
- Avoid using woolly blankets.
- Wash bed linen weekly at a high temperature (60 degrees or hotter).
- Dust rooms thoroughly with a damp cloth.
- Open the windows more and turn the heating down a degree or two.
- Where possible replace carpets with hard flooring - which is easier to keep dust free.
- Avoid getting a divan bed as the fabric covered base is the perfect hiding place for dust mites. Get a bed which can be hoovered under easily.
- Keep soft toys to a minimum. Wash them regularly or freeze them for 12 hours to kill the dust mites.
- Hoover fabric-covered furniture regularly.
- Use a vacuum cleaner without bags.

We realize that it will not always be practical to follow this advice all of the time. Just do what you can. All these steps will help to reduce your symptoms.

Further information

www.allergyuk.org; Helpline 01322 619898

www.healthy-house.co.uk; 0845 450 5950 (Local rate call)

www.allergymatters.com

www.netdoctor.co.uk

You may also telephone the ENT Nurse Practitioner on:

Oxford (01865) 231182

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

Elizabeth Miller, ENT Nurse Practitioner

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