

# Dust Mites and Asthma

Dust mites are tiny microscopic relatives of the spider that live on mattresses, bedding, upholstered furniture, carpets, and curtains. These tiny creatures feed on the flakes of skin that people and pets shed daily, and they thrive in warm and humid environments.

## Additional History Questions to Supplement the History Form

- Did you know that dust mite exposure can trigger asthma symptoms?
- What type of floor covering is in your child's bedroom?
- Do you have a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter?
- What have you tried so far to reduce dust/dust mite exposure?
- How often do you wash your child's bed linens?
- Are you currently using a mattress or pillow covering on your child's bed?
- Do you use other ways to decrease dust mite exposure?

## Possible Interventions:

No matter how clean a home is, dust mites cannot be totally eliminated. The following suggestions can reduce exposure. Emphasis should be placed on reducing dust mite exposure where the child sleeps.

- **Encase all pillows and mattresses of the beds that the child sleeps on using allergen impermeable encasings.** (There are numerous sources for allergen impermeable encasings, and prices as well as quality may vary.)
- **Wash bedding weekly to remove allergen. Wash in hot water (130° F) to kill mites**
- Replace wool or feathered bedding with synthetic materials that will withstand repeated hot water washing
- Either remove from the bedroom or wash and thoroughly dry stuffed toys weekly
- Move stuffed toys away from the pillow the child sleeps on
- Vacuum once or twice weekly preferably using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter or a double-layered microfilter bag (when the child is not around)
- Use a damp mop or rag to remove dust, not a dry cloth that just stirs up dust mite allergens
- Avoid use of humidifiers
- The following interventions are expensive and are only recommended after an allergist has identified your child as allergic to dust mites:
  - Consider replacing draperies with blinds or other wipeable window covering
  - Consider carpet removal in the child's bedroom
  - Consider removing upholstered furniture
- **Avoid use of ozone generators and certain ionic air cleaners which can actually generate harmful ozone**

## Follow-Up / Notes:

