

Basic measures to control exposure to indoor allergens

Indoor allergen	Recommendations for reducing exposure
Animal dander	Remove animal from house, or at minimum, keep animal out of patient's bedroom. Keep pet in a room with a HEPA filter and replace the filter as recommended by the manufacturer.
	Cover air ducts that lead to bedroom with filters. Replace filters as recommended by the manufacturer.
	Use air filters and vacuums with HEPA filters. Replace the filter as recommended by the manufacturer.
Dust mites	Less costly
	Encase mattress, pillows, and boxspring in allergen-impermeable covers. Finely woven covers for pillows and duvets are preferable.
	Wash bedding weekly in warm water with detergent or use electric dryer on hot setting.
	Reduce indoor humidity to <50 percent.
	More costly
	Remove carpets from the bedroom.
	Replace old upholstered furniture with leather, vinyl, or wood.
Cockroaches	Use poison bait or traps to control. Consult professional exterminator for severe infestation.
	Periodically clean home thoroughly.
	Encase all food fully and do not store garbage or papers inside the home.
	Fix water leaks.
Indoor mold	Clean moldy surfaces with dilute bleach solution.
	Fix water leaks.
	Reduce indoor humidity to <50 percent. Avoid use of humidifiers.
	Evaporative (or swamp) coolers should be avoided or cleaned regularly.
Rodents	Consult a professional exterminator.
	Periodically clean home thoroughly.
	All food should be stored in sealed containers. Do not store garbage inside.
	Repair holes in walls, doors, floors, and block other entry points.

The measures that can effectively reduce exposure are different for each indoor allergen. Those listed are suggested, but have not been verified to be effective in isolation. Studies showing greatest benefit from indoor allergen remediation were those that adapted the measures to each patient's individual sensitivities, and addressed all of a patient's allergies simultaneously.

HEPA: high-efficiency particulate air.

Adapted from: The Allergy Report. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (www.aaaai.org).

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Ways to reduce dust mite allergy symptoms

First: Bedrooms

Cover pillows and mattresses with zippered covers that trap in mites and mite allergens. These covers are made of special, tightly-woven material and should be labeled as specifically designed to block dust mites.

Wash sheets, pillowcases, and blankets in hot or warm water with detergent or dry in an electric dryer on the hot setting every week. If needed, replace blankets with ones that can be washed. If you must use comforters (or duvets), cover them with tightly woven covers.

Use washable, vinyl, or roll-type window covers.

Remove clutter, soft toys, and upholstered furniture.

Where possible, remove carpets or replace them with area rugs that can be cleaned or washed.

Second: Rest of house

Reduce upholstered furniture, especially old sofas.

Where possible, replace carpets with polished flooring. Carpets on concrete slabs or stuffy crawl spaces are a problem. Those carpets especially should be replaced with polished flooring.

Vacuum weekly using a cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter.

Window coverings should be washable, vinyl, or roll type.

Control humidity to less than 50 percent relative humidity at normal temperatures (between 68 to 72°F). To check humidity levels, you can buy a humidity monitor at a hardware store. If it's too humid, you can lower humidity by using an air conditioner.

Third: Changing houses*

If you have bad allergies and live in a basement or very damp home, think about moving.

People who are allergic to mites (or molds) often do much better if they live in an apartment (second floor or higher) or a house with second floor bedrooms and wooden floors.

* The average family in the United States moves approximately every four years.

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Tips for avoiding animal allergens (urine, saliva, or dander) in your home

If possible, remove animals from your home

Keep any animals outside, in the garage, or in a kennel. Keeping them out of certain rooms in the house will **not** remove animal allergens from your home.

After you remove the animal, clean your home thoroughly.

If you cannot remove the animals from your home, try these steps

Use an air filter with a "HEPA filter," but keep in mind that air filters help only a little. Most of the animal allergens in your home are not floating in the air. Air filters remove only allergens that are floating in the air.

Reduce the number of things in your home where allergens can build up. Examples include carpets, fabric-covered furniture, and drapes. Replace these with bare floors, furniture that is not covered with fabric, and window blinds.

Every week, vacuum with a vacuum cleaner that has a "HEPA filter."

If you are allergic to your dog, bathing your dog two times a week might help reduce your symptoms. If you are allergic to your cat, bathing your cat will probably not reduce your symptoms.

HEPA filter: high-efficiency particulate air filter.

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