

## DUST MITE GUIDELINES



### Key Messages:

- Dust mites are the most important indoor cause of allergies that can trigger asthma.
- Almost 2 out of 3 children with asthma (in Healthy Homes –I) were allergic to dust mites.
- Getting rid of dust mites can be a big help in controlling asthma for people who are allergic to mites. In some cases, getting rid of mites can eliminate all asthma symptoms.
- Dust mites are found in every home in our area, no matter how clean the house.
- Use of allergy control covers on mattresses and pillows is the most important method for controlling mites.
- Keeping the moisture level in the house low (below 50% relative humidity) is also important for controlling the dust mite population.

### CAS/CHW Actions:

- Assess prior education received by client and client's knowledge.
- Help client put allergy control covers on the mattress and pillow or verify that covers fit properly.
- Show how to clean off allergy control covers with sponge or damp cloth, or instruct how to vacuum the covers for the once a month cleaning.
- Review moisture control protocol.

### **CAS/CHW Future Visits: Assessment**

- Assess for presence of allergy control covers on mattress & pillow. Indicate in database if covers are not being used.
- Check to see if there are any problems with the mattress covers.

### **CAS/CHW Future Visits: Actions**

- Check the home problem list for any mite-related issues to address:
  - high humidity
  - sources of moisture
  - presence of stuffed animals
  - insufficient washing or freezing of stuffed animals
  - upholstered furniture
  - insufficient vacuuming or dusting
  - insufficient washing of bedding materials

### **Recommended Client Actions:**

- Put allergy control covers on the mattress & pillow.
- The allergy covers should be wiped off with a damp (not wet) cloth or vacuumed using the hard-edged attachment tool once a month.
- Wash bedding materials (sheets, pillowcases, and blankets) weekly in hot (130°) water. Return the temperature back to a safe 120° after washing bedding.
- Dry bedding materials in the dryer using the HOT cycle for at least 30 minutes.
- Keep stuffed animals out of the child's bed and sleeping area.
- Wash stuffed animals in the same manner as bedding each month or freeze them for 48 hours.
- Dust child's bedroom twice a week.
- Vacuum carpet or damp-mop hard floor in the child's bedroom twice a week.
- Remove upholstered furniture from the child's bedroom. Replace with wood, vinyl or leather furniture.
- If unable to change furniture, then vacuum upholstered furniture weekly.

- Avoid sleeping or lying on upholstered furniture or carpets.
- Use moisture control methods according to the moisture control protocol.

**Recommended Client Actions: Lower priority**

- Use fleece or other easily washable blankets to replace blankets/quilts/duvets that trap dust and are more difficult to wash.
- Wash covers only once a year or if soiled.
- Remove cloth-drapes, curtains and other window treatments from the child’s bedroom and use plastic or vinyl roller shades or blinds instead.
- If unable to remove drapes, vacuum them weekly.
- Store cleaned sheets in plastic bags to keep them from getting dusty.
- Remove carpets from the child’s bedroom. The next priority would be to remove carpets from other rooms, especially those that lie on concrete.
- Before taking up the carpet, check the condition of the underlying floor by lifting up a corner of the carpet.
  - If the client is a tenant, ask the client to check with the landlord/manager first before doing so. Be sure the client thinks it’s reasonable to approach the landlord manager on this issue before proceeding.

**Supplies:**

- Allergen control mattress & pillow covers

**Educational Handouts:**

- “Clear Your Home of Asthma Triggers” Environmental Protection Agency; EPA/402-F-99-005 (English, Spanish, Vietnamese)
- “How to Control Dust in Your Child’s Bedroom” You Can Control Asthma: A Book for the Family; Georgetown/AAFA, pages 14-15 (English, Spanish)

**Referrals:**

- None

**Background:**

- The most important method for controlling mites is to use allergy control covers on mattresses and pillows.
- Dust mites are tiny creatures related to spiders and ticks. Their source of food is human skin scales and animal dander.
- The highest levels of mites are found mainly in dust found in the mattress and bedding material such as blankets, sheets, pillows, and bed covers.
  - Washing bedding materials (sheets, pillowcases, blankets) weekly at a temperature of at least 130 degrees will kill dust mites. Many homes will not have water that is this hot.
    - Wash bedding at a laundromat which does have hot water, OR
    - Dry bedding outdoors on sunny days. It is best to lay sheets directly on a hard surface so that mites get hot and dried out, OR
    - Use the hottest water available in the home. This is the least effective method, OR
    - Dry bedding in a hot dryer for 30 minutes.
  - Dust mites are also found in carpets, drapes, soft toys and upholstered furniture.
  - Mites get their water from the moisture in the air so dust mites grow best in moist, humid places.

## Dust Mite Checklist

### Key Messages:

- Dust mites are the most important indoor cause of allergies
- Found in every home
- Allergy control covers most important method of control (mattress and pillow)
- Low moisture level helps control dust mite population
- Nearly 2 out of 3 kids with asthma were allergic to dust mites in a Seattle asthma study

### Recommended Client Actions:

- Covers: clean once/month
- Wash bedding in hot water (130 degrees). Assess home water temperature and options.
- Dry on Hot cycle 30 minutes
- Stuffed animals
  - remove
  - wash/freeze
- Dust bedroom (twice/week)
- Vacuum bedroom (twice/week)
- Upholstered furniture
  - remove/vacuum/avoid sleeping on it

### Lower Priority Client Actions:

- Use fleece
- Remove cloth drapes, etc. Use vinyl/plastic.
- Remove carpets
- Store sheets in plastic bags

### CAS/CHW Actions:

- Assess prior education and knowledge
- Help client put covers on mattress and pillow

### Future Visits:

- Check mattress and pillow covers
- Show how to clean mattress cover

#### **Supplies:**

- Allergen control mattress & pillow covers

#### **Educational Handouts:**

- "Clear Your Home of Asthma Triggers" Environmental Protection Agency; EPA/402-F-99-005 (English, Spanish, Vietnamese)
- "How to Control Dust in Your Child's Bedroom" You Can Control Asthma: A Book for the Family; Georgetown/AAFA, pages 14-15 (English, Spanish)