

House Dust Mites



Two species of house dust mites are common in the United States. The European dust mite (*Dermatophagoides pteronyssinus*) is prevalent in Hawaii and the coastal regions of California while the northern dust mite (*Dermatophagoides farinae*) is prevalent in the drier interior regions of the country.

House dust mites are small and cannot be seen with the naked eye. They do not bite or sting, but can cause an allergic reaction in persons sensitive to their presence. Most persons allergic to house dust are also allergic to house dust mites.

Symptoms of a house dust mite allergy include asthma, runny nose, watery eyes, headache, and sneezing. Children tend to be more reactive to house dust mites than adults. Consult an allergist if you suspect you react to house dust mites. Test and treatments for specific allergies are available.

Dust Mite Biology

House dust mites require a high relative humidity for survival. The European house dust mite has a maximum reproduction rate at temperatures slightly lower than 77 F and a relative humidity of 70-80%. Adults live for approximately 30 days. House dust mite populations tend to decrease in winter when homes are heated and the relative humidity drops.

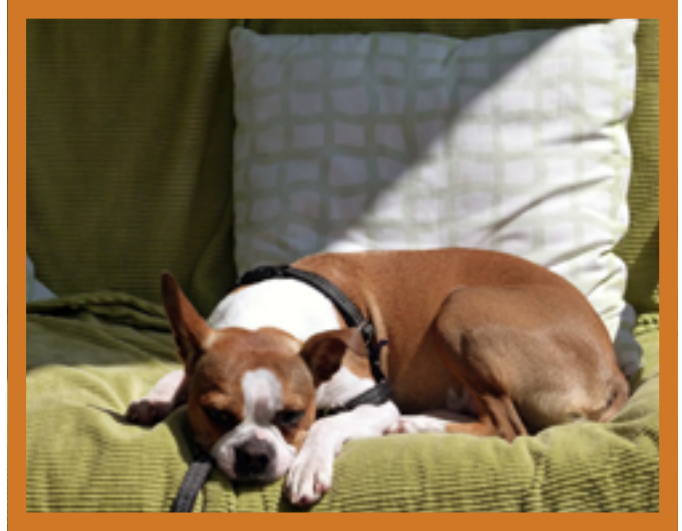


House Dust Mite Control

Although several methods have been tried to control house dust mites, there is little evidence to support lasting control from these efforts. House dust mites feed on organic matter found in house dust as well as dead skin cells that we and our pets shed every day. As a result, most house dust mites are found in mattresses and pillows and other soft furnishings, such as upholstered furniture, carpeting, and pet bedding.

Frequent vacuuming of the bedroom and upholstered furniture is recommended to remove house dust mites as well as their feces or cast skin, which may cause a reaction.

Wash bedding, including blankets, once a week. Beds and bedsprings should be kept free of dust. If possible, keep upholstered furniture out of the bedroom. Do not sweep or shake bedding. This will only stir up dust and increase reactions. Clean baseboards once a week. Some control has been reported by encasing the mattress in a closed plastic mattress cover.



Lowering the relative humidity in a house to 60% or lower with a dehumidifier may be used to control populations. However, this method is not practical for long term control. Attics and crawl spaces should be properly vented to ensure excessive moisture does not build up.

At this time there are no pesticides registered for the control of house dust mites.

San Mateo County Mosquito and Vector Control District

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Monday-Friday
8a.m. to 4:30p.m.

www.smcmvcd.org

