

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

ANY ATTEMPT TO TREAT ASTHMA OR RESPIRATORY ALLERGY MUST BEGIN WITH GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AND AVOIDANCE OF KNOWN ALLERGENS AND IRRITANTS.

HOUSE DUST & DUST MITES:

As opposed to outside dust which is basically small particles of blowing dirt and may serve as an irritant, HOUSE DUST is a complicated substance which may cause true allergy. It consists of breakdown products of bedding materials, rugs, curtains, human hair, animal hair and dander, molds, body parts of insects, and outside dirt. The most important component to dust allergy is the dust mite, a microscopic insect-like animal, that is found in mattresses, carpets, upholstered furniture, and stuffed animals etc. These creatures eat discarded hair and skin scales. The best way to prevent symptoms from house dust allergy is to make the environment as dust free as possible. It is important to pay special attention to the bedroom where much time is spent.

To "Dust-Proof" the Bedroom:

- ◇ 1. Initially, someone other than the patient, if possible, should thoroughly wet mop and dust the room including lights, closets, window sills, shelves, moldings, and furniture.
- ◇ 2. Encase mattress and box springs in plastic allergen impermeable covers.
- ◇ 3. All sheets should be washed every one to two weeks in hot water. Hot water kills dust mites more effectively than detergents or the dryer.
- ◇ 4. Pillows should be synthetic. Avoid feather pillows as they attract large amounts of dust mites.
- ◇ 5. Blankets and comforters should be synthetic and washed frequently in hot water. Avoid down comforters and wool blankets as they attract large amounts of dust mites.
- ◇ 6. Flooring -- wood or tile floors are best. If carpeting is present, and not removable, it is possible to decrease the concentration of dust mites by specially designed powders and sprays.
- ◇ 7. All stuffed animals and stuffed furniture should be removed from the bedroom.
- ◇ 8. Considering covering air vents with cheese cloth or turning off the vent to that room to avoid blowing dust mite laden air into the room while the furnace is in operation.
- ◇ 9. Set humidistat on furnace to less than 50 percent.

MOLD

Mold is a tiny flower-like growth, ten times smaller than pollen, which flourishes in warm, damp environments, both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor molds pose a problem in the spring and fall due to wet leaves, damp dirt, rotting wood, and decaying vegetation. Indoor mold spores may occur year round on holiday decorations, indoor plants, damp basements, and moist bathrooms.

To Decrease Mold Exposure:

- ◇ 1. Control humidity in your home. Set the humidistat on any furnace humidifier to less than 45 percent. Use a dehumidifier in the basement. Be sure to clean the humidifier and empty the drip pan regularly.
- ◇ 2. Keep potentially damp areas clean!! Clean all surfaces where mold can grow at least once weekly with a mixture of one-part chlorine bleach to 20 parts hot (130 degree) water. Some of the commercially available bleach cleaners may also be helpful. (DO NOT MIX CHLORINE BLEACH WITH OTHER CLEANING AGENTS and avoid splashing in your eyes or on your skin). Areas to clean: refrigerator drip pans, shower stalls and curtains, and around sinks.
- ◇ 3. Avoid using vaporizers as they may become moldy and spray mold spores into a patients bedroom. If medically necessary, vaporizers may be used for a few days, but must be cleaned and allow to dry daily.
- ◇ 4. Remove all plants and stuffed animals from the patient's bedroom. Check other houseplants regularly for signs of mold growth.
- ◇ 5. Check your house carefully for leaks especially in bathrooms, closets, walls, and basements. Repair leaks.
- ◇ 6. Smooth wipeable surfaces consisting of tile, enamel paint, or vinyl wallpaper ease cleaning and help prevent mold growth. Local hardware stores or allergy supply companies can provide you with names of additives to add to paint and wallpaper glue that inhibit mold growth.
- ◇ 7. Use your air conditioner on hot humid days.
- ◇ 8. If your home is flooded, give away all wet padded furniture, rugs, draperies, and clothing as it is nearly impossible to remove mold from these objects by cleaning and drying. Clean all walls, floors, and hard surfaces with a bleach cleaner and consider purchasing a high efficiency air (HEPA) filter unit to remove mold spores throughout the home.

PETS

Allergy to cats is caused by substances in the saliva. They lick their fur and the fur sheds which may cause major difficulties to the cat allergic person. Dog allergy appears to come from their dander and not just their hair. Pets to which you are allergic are best kept out of the home or at least out of the patients bedroom at all times!! If you keep the pet, you will likely continue to have symptoms despite medications, allergy shots, or other treatments.

IRRITANTS

Once the lining of the respiratory tract is inflamed in individuals with respiratory allergy, the nose and/or lungs are more sensitive to any potential irritants in the air. In addition to dust, mold, and animal dander, smoke, chemical odors, fumes, and pollution will be very aggravating.

SMOKING is harmful to everyone with asthma or respiratory allergy. There must be **NO SMOKING** in enclosed spaces such as the house or car, or the problem will continue.