



Your allergy test results: _____

What are dust mites? Where do they live?

Dust mites are tiny creatures that are close relatives of spiders. While they are too small to see with the human eye, many people are allergic to them. Dust mites are naturally found in all homes — no matter how clean the home is. They like warm, moist places, including:

- Bedding
- Carpets
- Curtains
- Upholstered furniture

How can I control dust mites?

There are many ways to control the effects of dust mites in your home. Studies show that a large number of dust mites are found in the bedroom, so it's important to start there.

Caring for your bedroom

Clean the bedroom at least once a week.

- **Wash bedding in hot water and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes.**
- Wash stuffed animals in hot water and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- Put dust mite-proof encasings (covers) on your mattress, box spring and pillows.
 - Buy encasings with a pore diameter of 6 microns or less. This information is on the packaging or on the product page if you are ordering online.
 - Encasings should completely surround the item and zip shut.
 - Wash the encasings in hot water every 6–12 months.
- Vacuum the mattress every 6–12 months.
- Do not use a humidifier.

Caring for your floors

Bare floors (wood or linoleum), especially in bedrooms, are best to help control dust mites. Large amounts of dust mites can get in carpeting, especially in places where there is moisture in the air, like basements.

- Put or throw away items that attract dust mites, like:
 - Carpeting
 - Clutter
 - Drapes
 - Rugs
 - Stuffed animals

- If you can't take the carpeting out of the bedroom:
 - Vacuum the carpet twice a week with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filtered vacuum.
 - Do not sit on the carpet.
 - Use a dehumidifier to reduce the humidity level in the home.
 - Use air cleaners that have HEPA filters.

How do I clean up pet allergens?

Pet allergies are caused by skin and dander (allergens). **No animal is hypoallergenic** (totally without allergens). Even hairless pets make allergens.

- If taking away the pet is not possible:
 - Wash hands after touching the pet.
 - Keep the pet out of the bedroom.
 - Groom, bathe and brush the pet at least twice a month.
- Bathe and change clothing after being around pets.
- You may unexpectedly come in contact with pets or animals outside of your home. For example:
 - Pets or animals may visit the classroom.
 - Horsehair may be in mattresses, furniture or carpet padding.
 - Horsehair plaster may be in older homes.

How do I keep mold out of my home?

Humidity helps mold grow. It's important **to keep your home clean and dry** (with humidity level less than 50%), especially basements and bathrooms.

- Use air conditioners and dehumidifiers. Check and replace the filters regularly.
- Regularly clean toilets, sinks, faucets and shower curtains.
- Do not use humidifiers. Mold can live in a humidifier and it can spread into the room when you are using the humidifier.

How do I keep pollen out of my home?

Pollens are tiny parts of trees, grass, weeds and other plants released into the air at different parts of the year. Pollen seasons for New England are:

- Trees: March–June
- Grass: May–early June
- Weeds: August–end of October

How can I control and get rid of pollen?

- Keep windows and doors closed during pollen season.
- Use air conditioners to help filter out pollen.
- Wash toys and sports equipment that are used outdoors. Keep them out of the bedroom and living areas.
- Bathe or shower after all outdoor activity.
 - Wash hair thoroughly.
 - Change into fresh clothes and wash the dirty ones.

For more information

Please call the Division of Allergy and Immunology at 617-355-6117.

This Family Education Sheet is available in [Arabic](#), [Spanish](#) and [Simplified Chinese](#).