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Overpowering Dust Mites

Seven Steps to reduce dust mites and allergens:

- > Use a pillow & mattress covers then wash regularly.
- > Wash bed linen in over 55C hot water to kill the mites and remove their allergens.
- > Remove fitted carpets, as they are a popular breeding ground for mites.
- > Replace soft furnishings such as curtains, soft toys and sheepskins.
- > Regularly put your rugs and other soft furnishings out in the sun.
- > Improve ventilation to reduce humidity and open doors & windows to circulate air.
- > Vacuum once a week to keep the mites at bay.

Research has confirmed simple steps can reduce the household dust mites that are known to trigger asthma and hayfever.

The study, by researchers from the University of Washington and Harvard University in the United States, evaluated practical methods to reduce dust mites in 39 low-income families' urban homes.

Pillows and mattresses were encased in allergen-resistant covers, bedding was washed weekly in hot water and carpets and furnishings were steam cleaned and/or vacuumed.

The researchers found all the measures were effective in reducing dust in the homes. Steam cleaning produced particularly good results, according to chief author Dr Darryl Zeldin.

The levels of dust mites in carpet and furniture that had been steam cleaned & vacuumed stayed low for up to eight weeks after the treatment, compared to four weeks for vacuuming alone. Zeldin said: "We believe that the hot, dry steam kills the mites and the vacuuming removes them from the carpet."

The US research was published on Wednesday, two days after Australian doctors announced our childhood asthma rates were the - highest in the world.

More than one in four Australian children now have asthma symptoms, according to the Co-operative Research Centre for Asthma article published in The Medical Journal of Australia. An estimated 10 per cent of Australian adults also have asthma.

House dust mite allergy is one factor known to increase the frequency and severity of asthma. Dust mites live off human skin scales and thrive in warm humid climates. The protein found in their droppings is what causes an allergic response in humans.

These droppings continue to cause allergic symptoms even after the mite has died.

Article Courtesy of The Sun Herald Aug 12, 2001