

## Reducing Allergy Triggers

If you know your child has an allergy, one of the most important things to do is to reduce exposure to allergic triggers. By trying the following measures in your home, you may be able to avoid the cause of the allergy:

- Keep windows closed during the pollen season, especially on windy days when dust and pollen blow around and in the morning when some pollen counts are highest.
- Keep the house clean and dry to reduce mold and dust mites.
- Keep the household free of pets and indoor plants.
- Avoid foods or other substances known to cause allergic reactions in your child.
- Prevent anyone from smoking anywhere near your child, especially in your home and car.

Since your child spends a considerable amount of time in his or her bedroom each night, this room is one of the areas you should focus on keeping free of allergy triggers, especially dust.

Dust is one of the major triggers of allergy symptoms. Every house has dust hiding in and on such things as upholstered furniture, mattresses, box springs, pillows, wool rugs, rug pads, stuffed animals, blankets, unfiltered furnace air and feathers. This is the cause of most allergies and is created by house dust mites.

Fortunately, there are actions you can take to control dust. Start by making your whole house, and especially your child's bedroom, as dust-free as possible. To get started, empty his or her bedroom completely and clean it thoroughly. If you can, remove wall-to-wall carpeting and replace it with wooden or linoleum flooring. Try covering the furnace or air-conditioner outlets with glass-fiber or cheesecloth filters, and clean wall or floor heating units weekly. Keep only one bed in the room and cover the pillows, mattress and box spring (which should be scrubbed) with dustproof casings. It's best to use cotton or synthetic blankets, not quilts or comforters. Also, rely on rubber or dacron pillows (not those filled with feathers because they collect more dust), and launder sheets and pillowcases in hot water (150 degrees Fahrenheit).

Once you've completed these initial measures, you should clean the bedroom thoroughly at least once a week, airing it out on that day, then leaving the doors and windows closed for the rest of the week. When you dust, use a damp or oiled cloth to avoid spreading dust around the room.

Another common culprit of allergy symptoms is mold. Mold (small pieces of plants that contain spores or seeds) grows outdoors in cool, damp, dark places, such as in soil, grass and dead leaves. Indoors, it's commonly found in damp cellars, closets, attics, old mattresses, and pillows and blankets that haven't been aired out in a long time. It also grows in wicker baskets used as planters, on dried flowers and on artificial Christmas trees.

Mold also can be found in bathrooms and damp basements. To limit opportunities for mold to grow, don't use carpeting and wallpaper in these rooms. Also, make sure

your bathrooms have exhaust fans that work. Throughout the house, replace any carpet that's been saturated by a big water spill or flood. Avoid using vaporizers, humidifiers and swamp coolers that introduce moisture back into the environment. And in the basement, a dehumidifier can be helpful.

You can destroy mold with several types of disinfectants, but be careful to store them in a safe place, away from curious toddlers. Sometimes a room air purifier will help remove mold spores and house dust. For some children, air conditioning helps. But for others, it makes the allergy worse.

Outside your home, you can take steps to reduce mold by pruning and trimming back large shrubs so that light comes into your house. Using nonorganic material for mulching and other landscaping tasks, and removing dead leaves and grass clippings as soon as possible also can make it more difficult for mold to grow.