

Southwest Allergy and Asthma Associates, P.A.

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Find this handout and other educational information at www.elpasoallergy.com

-----Environmental Allergy Control Measures-----

An important way to reduce the symptoms of allergic rhinitis is to avoid the allergens that you are sensitive to.

HOUSE DUST:

Many different substances are found in house dust including mold, dust mites, soil, pollen, insecticide, pet dander, cockroach and synthetic fibers. As most people spend 1/3 of their day in their bedroom extra attention should be placed on dust control measures in the bedroom.

- Vacuum carpets or damp mop floors frequently.
- Install wood or tile floors if you are considering replacing the carpeting in your home. Old carpets can accumulate lots of dust.
- All furniture surfaces and fan blades should be cleaned weekly with a damp cloth.
- Replace dust trapping blinds and curtains with roll down shades, washable curtains or shutters. Clean at least once a month.
- Keep windows closed and use air-conditioning.
- Stuffed animals should be removed unless they can be washed monthly.
- Books should not be kept in the bedroom. Dust frequently.
- Closets should be closed and cleaned monthly.
- Keep all pets out of the bedroom. Even if you are not allergic to your cat or dog, animal coats tend to accumulate dust.

DUST MITES:

Dust mites are microscopic insects of the spider family that feed on human skin cells that flake off the body. Dust mites are found mainly in bedding and mattresses where the largest amounts of skin cells are found.

- Pillows, mattresses and box springs should be encased in allergen-proof zippered covers that prevent the penetration of dust mites and dust.
- Sheets and comforters should be washed weekly in hot water (>130°F) or with chlorine bleach.
- Humidifiers should not be used as this stimulates the growth of dust mites.



INDOOR MOLDS:

Several species of mold can grow indoors. Molds tend to accumulate in humid and poorly ventilated areas of the household especially the bathroom.

- Clean bathroom tile, grout and surfaces under the sink and behind the toilet regularly.
- Houseplants should be removed from the bedroom as molds can grow on the soil. Do not allow water to pool in the container around the plant.
- Fruits and other foods should not be allowed to ripen or decay on kitchen counters. Keep these in the refrigerator.
- Do not keep dry firewood inside the house.
- Remove water-damaged carpeting and sheetrock.

POLLENS:

The main pollens in the El Paso area are from Mulberry, Ash and Pecan trees in the spring, Bermuda grass from May to September, and Carelessweed, Pigweed, and tumbleweed in the fall.

- During periods of high pollen counts and windy days, outdoor activities should be minimized.
- Windows should remain closed especially at night as the highest pollen levels are found from 3 to 6AM.
- Air conditioning should be used at home and while driving to filter the air.
- Mowing the lawn and raking leaves should be avoided. If you have to perform these activities a disposable mask should be worn. In addition, you should take your antihistamine at least 30 minutes prior to starting.