

House dust mites and storage mites



House Dust Mites

House dust mites are the most common cause of allergy in the UK. These mites are very small and almost transparent. It is dust mite faeces rather than the dust mites themselves that provoke the allergic reaction.

A teaspoon of dust may contain more than 250,000 mite droppings! They prefer warm, humid conditions and live on shed skin and hair from humans and animals, insect scales and fabric particles.

They require moisture from the air to digest this food, so humidity influences the size of the mite populations. Removing dust mites from the environment is impossible, but there are procedures to reduce their presence:

- ➔ Vacuum/dryclean carpets, curtains and upholstery regularly.
- ➔ Use high efficiency vacuum cleaners with brushes that beat the carpet fibres and aid removal of dust and live mites.
- ➔ Turn down the central heating.
- ➔ Use direct heat sources to minimise dust mites – steam cleaning, electric blankets and direct sunlight exposure.
- ➔ Change to alternative flooring i.e wood, vinyl.
- ➔ Change to lightweight, washable curtains, spongeable roller or vertical blinds.
- ➔ Install air conditioning/open windows regularly.
- ➔ Wash your pet's bedding regularly at hot temperatures or freeze. This includes favourite stuffed toys, e.g. freeze the soft toys for 24 hours to kill the mites then wash in the washing machine to remove the dead mites and droppings.
- ➔ Choose man-made fibres rather than natural.
- ➔ Encase bedding in airtight/plastic covers.
- ➔ Reduce humidity and increase ventilation in the home. This is especially important in the kitchen and bathroom – keep the doors closed to avoid spreading dampness to the rest of the house. Don't dry clothes indoors, tumble dry instead or use a room not accessible to your pet.
- ➔ Limit your pet's access to only one room rather than free range in the home.
- ➔ Use chemical methods – a number of insecticides are effective in reducing dust mite levels and in time provide some relief.

The information supplied is intended for guidance only.

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Storage Mites

With the increased tendency to use dry cereal-based foods or kibbles, storage mite allergies are becoming more prevalent as a cause of allergy hypersensitivity.

Two of the most common types of storage mite found in the UK are included on the SENSITEST® indoor allergy panel – *Acarus siro* and *Glycophagus destructor*.

Storage mites are tiny, white insects that feed on stored foods such as flour, grain and seeds. Management of your pet's food can greatly reduce their exposure to storage mites.

This involves avoiding the foods where storage mites are known to be prevalent – in particular poorly stored dry complete diets.

Recommendations are to:

- ➔ Always empty the food from the original packaging into resealable plastic containers discarding the dust at the bottom of the bag.
- ➔ Clean these plastic containers regularly, again discarding any dust at the bottom and always do this before adding new food.
- ➔ Keep the food in dry, cool conditions.
- ➔ Purchase only small bags of food rather than large bulk packs to ensure fresher batches are fed.
- ➔ Wipe your pet's face with a damp cloth when it has finished feeding to remove any food residues.
- ➔ Feed wet/tinned foods.
- ➔ Feed a home prepared diet.
- ➔ Never use any foods after the use by date.

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