



# Understanding Dust Mite Allergy

## The Basic Facts on Dust Mites:

Dust mites are eight-legged arachnids and are relatives to spiders and ticks. Dust mites are microscopic and, unlike bed bugs, cannot be seen by the naked eye. Adult mites live for 2-to-3 months. During this time a female dust mite can lay 25-to-50 eggs every 3 weeks. Large dust mite populations can result, with up to 1 million dust mites inhabiting a single bed!

### Q: Where do dust mites live?

**A:** Dust mites are found in nearly all homes, even in the cleanest ones. Dust mites prefer warm and humid environments. If relative humidity is greater than 50% for some portion of the year where you live, you can expect to have dust mite populations in your home. Dust mites thrive in dark, warm and humid environments and are typically found in pillows, mattresses, comforters, blankets, carpets and upholstered furniture. These areas also provide the mite's greatest food source, the shed scales of human skin.

### Q: What's the difference between dust and dust mites?

**A:** Dust is made up of many different particles, a variety of which can cause allergies. The dust mite is much smaller and more culpable because of the waste it leaves behind—more than 100,000 of its waste particles can be present in a gram of dust.

### Q: Am I allergic to the dust mite itself and what are dust mite allergens?

**A:** Allergies are not caused by inhaling the mite itself. Instead, you are sensitive to a combination of their waste particles and their dead body fragments. These particles are called dust mite allergens. Tiny dust mite allergens become airborne and are inhaled when you sleep at night, walk or sit on the carpet or sit on upholstered furniture. Unfortunately, long after a dust mite dies, its allergen particles will continue to cause allergy symptoms.

### Q: What is the difference between dust mites and bed bugs?

**A:** Both dust mites and bed bugs can find an ideal living environment in your bed and, unfortunately, both also find humans to be an excellent food source. Dust mites feed off of our shed skin cells while bed bugs bite us directly in order to feed off of our blood. Dust mites cause allergy symptoms and bed bugs do not.

### Q: What protection does an encasing provide?

**A:** An allergy encasing creates a protective layer between you and the dust mite allergens in your bed. Encasings are made from either tightly woven specialized fabrics or they include a membrane layer, and each is designed to block allergy particles from escaping from the bed. So, encasings trap the dust mites and their allergens away from your body. Certain encasings are also certified for bed bug protection based on the quality of the encasing material and the way the encasing is made.