

Patient Advice Sheet

AVOIDANCE OF EXPOSURE TO HOUSE DUST MITE

BEDS AND BEDDING - The most important consideration

One approach is a solid foam mattresses covered with a plastic or PVC cover. This cover prevents any penetration of the mite into the foam, and has the advantage of being easily wiped clean. Acrylan or polyester underblankets are available which counteract the cold feel of the plastic cover and prevent slipping of the overlying bedclothes.

New covers are now on the market that claim to seal mattresses, pillows and downies and act as a complete barrier to the allergen - allowing normal mattresses and even feather pillows to be used.

All sheets, blankets, quilts or downies must be readily washable and should be thoroughly washed and aired every two to three months. Materials such as polyester/cotton, acrylan and dacron are ideal. Using these materials it is possible to wash the underblanket blankets and downies in the morning, and even in winter-time, and have them dried and back on the bed by evening. This saves having to duplicate blankets, quilts, etc., in order to achieve the mandatory 2 -3 monthly wash. The bed base should be of simple springs or wooden slats. No upholstered divan bases.

OTHER POINTS TO WATCH

Soft toys can become infested with house dust mites as readily as bedding. These should, therefore, be made of washable materials and treated similarly to the bed.

Sufferers from house dust mite allergy should not sleep in or sit or bounce on other beds unless these have been treated in a similar fashion to their own.

If there is more than one bed in the patient's bedroom, then these other beds must be treated also, otherwise there will be an aerosol effect of house dust mites from these beds with every movement of their occupants.

Children must be advised not to bounce on upholstered furniture, crawl under beds or hide in wardrobes.

Vacuuming of carpets must not be done in the presence of the house dust sufferer, and preferably not within two hours of him being around.

If the sufferer is the housecarer, it is advisable that all the beds in the house be treated so that s/he does not become exposed when dealing with the beds of other members of the family. S/he should also either get someone else to do the vacuuming for them, or else wear an efficient mask while performing this task.

Ducted-air central heating must be avoided as this spreads house dust mites throughout the whole atmosphere of the house.

HOLIDAYS

The problem of sleeping arrangements while on holiday is easily dealt with. The patient should take with him his own pillow, a large sheet of good quality plastic, and a washable sleeping bag (and blankets, if desired). The plastic is spread over the entire bed on which he will sleep, and the sleeping bag and pillow placed on top. Ideally there should be no one else sharing his room.