

ALLERGY HYGIENE

Steps to limit exposure to pollen, mold spores, and dust that cause allergic symptoms:

1. Wash your hands and face several times a day. Pollen, mold spores, and dust adhere to moisture and oil on your skin. Even a small amount of allergen reaching the membranes of your nose or eyes can cause inflammation of the nasopharyngeal and conjunctival tissues.
2. The nose is a filtering system collecting allergens. Rinse your nose with salt water several times a day. Bottled saline may be purchased at pharmacies or grocery stores. To make a hypertonic saline solution add ½ teaspoon of salt (preferably iodide free) to 8 ounces of lukewarm water. Leaning over the sink with your head turned slightly to one side sniff the solution from the palm of your hand. Repeat on the opposite side then gently blow your nose or expectorate. Using a sinus rinsing device such as NeilMed Sinus Rinse Kit, a neti pot, or a nasal irrigation syringe is another way to remove allergens, mucus, and reduce swelling.
3. Wash your hair before going to bed; hair acts as a filter collecting allergens.
4. Cover mattresses, box springs, and pillows in allergy encasings. Woven fabrics with a pore size up to 6 microns effectively control passage of mite and cat allergens while permitting airflow. These covers may be purchased locally or online from allergy control product suppliers.
5. Wash bedding weekly (including comforters and duvet covers) in warm, preferably hot water and dry on a hot setting. Change pillowcases more often.
6. At least once a week vacuum, preferably using a HEPA bag or filter, and dust with a damp cloth. Use washable roll-type window coverings in place of fabric drapes when possible.
7. Avoid pets in bedrooms and preferably not in the home.
8. Use decongestants/antihistamines, nasal steroid spray and other antiallergenic medications as directed. Rinse nose with saline and wait approximately ½ hour before using a nasal steroid medication.
9. Keep windows closed. If available, use air conditioning that cleans, cools and keeps humidity at < 50 percent. Be sure to follow regular HVAC maintenance schedules and replace disposable filters every three months noting the date for the next filter change. Buy filters with a MERV (minimum efficiency reporting value) rating between 11-13 to ensure optimal allergen filtration.
10. Stay indoors when pollen or mold counts are high. If your symptoms are severe and long periods of outdoor exposure are unavoidable, when returning indoors leave pollen-laden clothes in laundry area, and shower and shampoo your hair.

Revised May 8, 2018