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PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A DUST-FREE ROOM

The instructions offered below may seem unnecessarily severe, but experience has shown that a dust-free environment for even a part of a 24-hour period will be substantially beneficial for the dust-sensitive patient. It is impossible to control the dust factor throughout the home or place of work, but the sleeping quarters do lend themselves to rigid control.

The infiltration of dust into a bedroom is insidious and cannot be controlled by ordinary housecleaning methods. Dust filters into the room from around the windows and spaces around the frames. Old dust, which is the most antigenic, also comes from other rooms in the house, while many heating systems are dust circulators.

Pillows, mattresses, box springs, bed pads, blankets, bedspreads, comforters, quilts, stuffed furniture, rugs, and drapes all break down to produce substances of allergic importance and, if mites are present, all become collectors of mite antigen.

Cleaning walls, ceiling and floor

Before cleaning the room, remove all furniture, rugs, carpets, curtains, and drapes. All the clothes closets should be emptied (keep clothes elsewhere or keep clothing scrupulously clean, dust-free, and store in plastic bags). Clean the vacant room as follows: seal all furnace pipes leading into the room, clean the walls and ceiling with a damp cloth, scrub the woodwork and the floors in the room, scrub radiators, ceilings, walls, and floors of closets and wax the floors. Linoleum is the preferred floor covering. Hardwood floors are also satisfactory.

If mold has grown on walls or window sills, it should be washed off with soap, water and household bleach or a potent mold inhibitor.

Preparation of beds

Scrub the bed frames and the springs. The room should contain only beds of metal or wood. When box springs or mattresses are used, they must be covered with dust-proof coverings or if uncovered, vacuumed weekly. In humid climates where mold can grow on rubber or synthetics, covers may be necessary.

Care of bedding

Foam rubber or a synthetic (dacron, etc.) pillow must be used. Do not use feather, kapok, or down pillows. Allergen-proof coverings are available and can also be used on pillows. Use freshly washed cotton bedding, cotton sheets, and pillow cases. Use cotton, polyester, or other synthetic fiber blankets. Unnapped 100% wool blankets may be tolerated. Do not use quilts, comforters or mattress pads. A cotton blanket folded in half may be substituted for a mattress pad. Wash blankets every four to six weeks. A dustproofing product in the rinse water will greatly reduce the amount of lint and airborne particles. These measures also curtail the house dust mite antigen. Insecticides are too hazardous for use in control of mites.

Furnishings

No upholstered furniture, stuffed toys, or drapes should be used in the room. A wooden chair which has been scrubbed, and lintless cotton rag rugs or synthetic fiber rugs (washed at least once a week) may be used. Plain light curtains, washed once a week, may be used on the windows. Do not use shag or chenille type fabrics.

Dustproofing

There are dustproofing products available, which inhibit dust formation on furniture, rugs, blankets, and drapes. It is recommended that this type of product be used in the dust-free room in particular, as well as in the rest of the house to immobilize old dust and retard the formation of new dust. These products are easily applied, either by an aerosol spray can or simple spray equipment.

General Instructions

The dust-free room must be cleaned daily with an oiled or damp cloth, and given a thorough and complete cleaning once a week. The patient, of course, should not be in the room during the cleaning.

If possible, keep this room for sleeping only; dress in another room. At all times, brush clothes and shoes before entering the bedroom, since these may carry in the allergenic pollens, molds and dusts.

Keep the doors and windows of this room closed as much as possible, especially when not using the room. An air conditioner may be needed during the summer to keep the room comfortable for sleeping. Avoid drafts. Keep humidity as low as possible to prevent mold growth.

Articles of furniture which contain allergenic dusts should be removed from the house. If this is not possible, each article should be frequently and thoroughly vacuum-cleaned at a time when the patient is out of the house. Following the vacuum cleaning, the house should be aired thoroughly. Questionable furniture that is retained should be sealed with a dustproof plastic cover.

If the patient is a child, do not keep toys which will accumulate dust in the room. Use only washable toys that have non-allergenic covers and stuffing, and which are heat dried thoroughly to prevent mold growth. Avoid toys with animal hair covers or stuffing of feathers, sawdust, kapok, or hair.

Remove all dogs, cats, birds, and other pets from the house. Avoid carpet pads that contain animal hairs, coarse vegetable fibers, or animal glues. Pets such as dogs, cats, and birds may contribute to dust allergies and should be kept out of the house. Do not use insect sprays or powders. Avoid odoriferous substances, such as camphor, tar, room deodorants, etc. Be sure all clothes that have been put away are well aired before using them.

Electrostatic air filters are available as single room units or for complete home air filtration. These units are helpful in removing a large number of particles of dust, pollen, and mold spores from the air, in the home as well as filtering out pollen and mold spores from the outside air, thus removing a potential source of allergen exposure. Since some of this equipment may produce excess ozone, installation should always be discussed with the physician prior to purchase.

Room-sized air cleaners should be run continuously and the windows and doors kept closed to prevent contamination from other rooms or outdoors. The collecting plates on electrostatic type of air cleaner should be cleaned frequently according to the manufacturer's instructions. Dirty collecting plates are inefficient filters and may produce ozone which is irritating to the eyes and respiratory tract. None will be effective unless their installation is properly engineered. Therefore, always deal with established, reputable heating and ventilation contractors, and consult your physician.



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