Clinical Allergy Tips
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From the Editor: House dust mite allergy is very common and has a major impact on patient quality of life. In this Clinical Allergy Tip, Dr. Menachem Rottem provides practical information on how to advise patients to avoid these important indoor allergens.

House Dust Mites – Practical Guidance for Avoidance
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House dust mites are a major component in the house dust and are responsible for the majority of allergic reactions to perennial allergens. The advice to reduce exposure is often accompanied by one of two reactions:

"Our house is extremely clean" or "Nothing can be done to avoid house dust".

It is the responsibility of the physician or nurse at that stage to explain that avoidance of house dust mites is far and different from "a clean house" and that allergen avoidance can be successful if performed in a holistic manner and with full understanding. These tools should be applied by the patient and his family in accordance with their life style and preferences.

There are three main measures that need and can be taken to avoid house dust mites:

1. Reduce accumulation of dust in general
2. Separate the patient from the dust
3. Decrease mites and/or their secretions

The 1st measure can be achieved by reducing furniture, clothing, carpeting, books, stuffed animals, and so forth, that are the growth environment for mites, especially in bedroom.

The 2nd measure can be achieved by using encasing especially for the pillow and mattress, so when the patient is in bed he or she avoids contact with the pillow or mattress where the mites reside. The patient should avoid direct exposure to air-condition flow whether at home or in the car. Special micro-filters for air-conditioners can be helpful to avoid and reduce such exposure. The patient should avoid using
toilet paper to wipe the nose as these papers may be full of mites. Alternatively, one can use small tissue paper – preferably moist, or even a clean towel at home that can be washed later. Wiping dust with a moist towel instead of using a dry towel or broom is another helpful way to avoid exposure to a cloud of dust mites.

The 3rd measure is directed to reduce mites' burden when already present. There are 3 ways:

- Wash clothing and linen in the highest temperature possible. This measure should be performed regularly on anything that was lying in the cupboard for more than 2 weeks, especially between seasons;

- Use acaricides at least every few months to handle households that cannot be washed in high temperature such as mattresses, sofas or carpets;

- Use vacuum cleaners with High-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Success will be reached only when implementing and using all means together.