



Towards the Low Allergen Home

The Low Allergen Home Concept

The design of the low allergen home addresses potential trigger factors and incorporates features which will reduce those triggers that may cause asthma. This living environment will help reduce dust mites and the incidence of other allergens in the home. It can provide an environment which has a uniform temperature with little build up or disturbance of dust, and low humidity to help reduce the growth of dust mites and mould. Most features can be incorporated into your new home or adapted in your existing home at little additional cost.

Does the design of the house affect asthma?

People with asthma have trigger factors. As part of a person's asthma management, it is important to identify and avoid contact with known trigger factors. Within the home and environment, potential trigger factors that have been identified are:-

- Dust mites
- Humidity
- Airborne particles
- Temperature Changes
- Fumes/gases
- Inhaled Irritants
- Mould

Important Issues

Ventilation

It is important to ensure adequate ventilation in the home. Unless windows have been completely sealed most homes provide this adequately.

Windows and Doors

Large windows and doors which are positioned to allow good ventilation are preferred. Direct sunlight will reduce humidity and reduce the number of any dust mites.

Flooring

Choose materials which are easy to wash and clean e.g. polished wood, ceramic tiles, cork, vinyl or slate.

Heating

Electric radiant heating products heat evenly with no concentrated hot or cold spots in the room. A static heating system does not disturb dust particles and other airborne allergies.

Air Conditioning

Air conditioning helps to provide a more comfortable temperature. Points to consider include circulation of fresh filtered air rather than re-circulated and the removal of dust, pollen and other foreign matters through effective filters. All systems should be serviced regularly to maintain efficiency.



Extractor Fans

Effective removal of moisture and fumes from wet and cooking areas are essential.

Horizontal Surfaces

(e.g. ledges, exposed tops of cupboards) Keep these to a minimum to reduce dust. Choose closed cupboards rather than open shelves. Floor to ceiling built in cupboards, wardrobes, etc are better than free standing ones.

Insulation

Insulated areas should be completely sealed to make sure that no airborne particles, which could cause irritation to people with asthma. Where insulation areas are not sealed, foil or polyester batts should be considered.

Cooking Appliances

The use of an electric oven, hot plates and appliances overcome any problems associated with gas emissions. Extractor fans in the cooking area are essential.

Vacuum Cleaners

A ducted central vacuum with external dust collection points is ideal as it does not release the dust into the home.

Pollution

Fumes from a variety of sources such as paints, varnishes, adhesives and burning gases can be potent triggers in some individuals, and exposure to these should be minimised wherever possible. Consult stockists for low allergen alternatives.

Furnishings

Furnishings should be selected with the intention of reducing dust and dust mites.

Floor Coverings

Scatter rugs which can be hung out and beaten to remove allergens are ideal. If carpet is laid it is preferable to use short pile carpets as they are easier to clean than the twist or loop pile. Synthetics have lower moisture content than wool making them less conducive to dust mite growth. Steam cleaning is a preferred cleaning method as the temperature of the steam will help reduce the dust mites.

Rapid drying is vital to minimise any mould growth.

Furniture

Leather and vinyl coverings are easier to clean and impervious to dust mites as opposed to fabric upholstery. Cane and rattan seats do not provide an environment conducive to mite growth. Removable cushions may be added as they are easy to clean.

Window Coverings

External blinds and shutters are preferred to drapes. Vertical and rollers blinds are also suitable. If recessed into the window the use of a pelmet is avoided, otherwise build pelmets to the ceiling to reduce dust collection surface.



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...Helping People Breathe Better...

Bedding

Warmth and moisture provide ideal conditions for the dust mite. The nutrients in skin flakes and proteins such as feathers and wool pillows, doonas and blankets also provide ideal conditions for them to thrive. Products made from feathers and wools are therefore not recommended. Encasing the mattress and pillows in protectors will stop the transfer of dust mites.

Removing dust mites from bedding

Hot wash (greater than 55°C) bedding e.g. sheets, pillow cases and quilts, in soapy water at least once every two weeks. Cold water does not kill dust mite. Eucalyptus oil added to the wash is also beneficial.

External Environment

See our low allergen garden Fact Sheet for more details.

For further information and support, contact the Asthma Foundation of WA on 1800 645 130 or visit www.asthmawa.org.au