



The BISSELL

Allergen Control Guide



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Household Allergies — Do You Have Them?

Do you get a drippy nose and watery eyes at the mere thought of your mother's beloved cat? Do you find yourself stocking up on tissues and antihistamines every spring and fall? Does vacuuming your home literally make you sick?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, you might be one of the 40 million sufferers of common household allergies. In addition to annoying symptoms, household allergies may also contribute to sleep disorders, fatigue, learning problems, and asthma. While there are [four main types](#) of allergies, this guide focuses on the common household inhalant allergies. Not sure that allergies are the source of your misery? Take our quick [Allergy Quiz](#).

Whether you have struggled with allergies all your life, or are concerned about developing a sensitivity in the future, our [Prevention Quiz](#) will help uncover the allergy hot spots in your home. In the section that follows, you will find helpful tips and information for reducing and controlling allergens in your home.

Learning what triggers allergies and understanding how to treat them can make the difference between a chronic debilitating illness and a productive, healthy lifestyle. For more information about allergies and allergic diseases, visit the [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology](#) website.

Clicking on the [blue links](#) will cross reference information within this booklet.

Clicking on the [red links](#) will access other web pages with more information.



This guide is meant for educational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice. Talk with your health care professional if you would like more information about allergies.

BISSELL Allergy Quiz

Wondering if you might have some common household allergies? Take our quick quiz and find out.

- | | Yes | No | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your nose seem to run non-stop with a thin, clear discharge? |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have itchy, watery eyes, often with uncontrollable sneezing fits? |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you frequently kept awake at night by nasal congestion or an unproductive, hacking cough? |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you a "mouth breather"? |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have dark circles or pain around your eyes? |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does a tickling or itching feeling cause you to frequently wiggle, wipe, or push up on your nose (allergic salute)? |
| 7. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there times when you feel weak, irritable, fatigued or have difficulty concentrating? |



- | | Yes | No | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 8. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you bothered by strong smells, like perfumes, tobacco smoke, or cleaning products? |
| 9. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you frequently have a skin rash? |
| 10. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you noticed your symptoms disappear either at certain times of the year, when you are away from home, or when you sleep in a different room? |
| 11. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do your symptoms flare when you're doing certain activities, like cutting the lawn or vacuuming your home? |
| 12. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If you're an asthma sufferer, do you notice times of day or year when your symptoms are worse? |

If you answer "yes" to two or more of these questions, you might be experiencing an allergic reaction to common household allergens. A certified allergist or immunologist can diagnose your allergies and relieve your discomfort.

What Exactly Are Allergies?

Very simply, “allergies” are your immune system’s over-reaction to common, otherwise harmless substances in the environment. These substances, called [allergens](#), routinely enter our bodies during everyday life, but only affect people who are sensitive to them. [Allergic diseases](#) are your immune system’s reaction when an allergen “invades” your body.

The Four Types of Allergies



Inhalant – [pollens](#), [dust mite](#) and [cockroach droppings](#), [animal dander](#), are [mold spores](#).



Contact – cosmetic, drugs, plants, jewelry, latex, chemicals/dyes



Ingested – foods, drugs



Injected – drugs, blood products, stinging insects

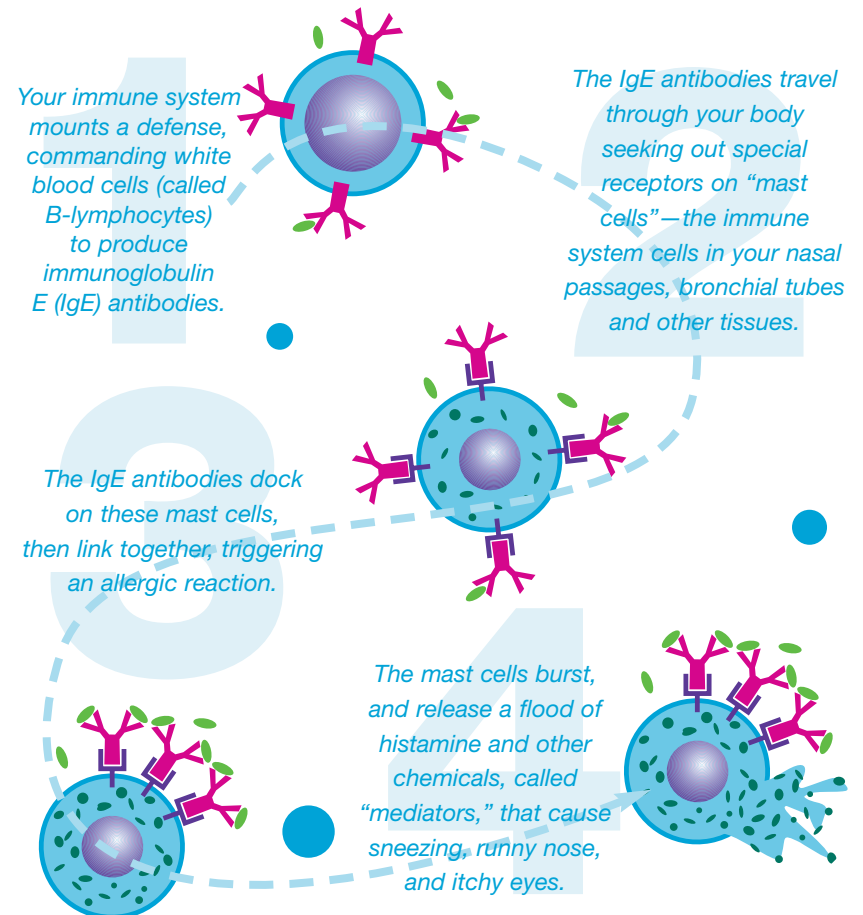
An allergy-prone person develops a specific allergy only after repeated exposure to an allergen. So it is very possible to develop an allergy to cat dander, for example, even though you have lived with cats all your life, or to develop a dust mite allergy after years of living with wall-to-wall carpeting. This process is called sensitization.

Too Much of a Good Thing
The immune system usually protects your body from harmful substances like viruses and bacteria. If you have allergies, your immune system is super sensitive to and attacks otherwise harmless substances in your environment called [allergens](#).



Why Do They Make Me Sneeze?

Scientifically speaking, the sneezing, runny nose and itchy eyes of inhalant allergies are the result of an “IgE-mediated response” to an unwanted guest in your respiratory system.



Antihistamine drugs can be effective for [controlling the symptoms](#) caused by histamine release, but they work too late in the process to actually stop an allergic reaction. New drugs are currently being tested that would prevent IgE antibodies from docking on mast cells and prevent an allergic reaction in the first place.

Allergic Diseases

“Allergic diseases” — including rhinitis or “hay fever” (sneezing, runny nose, congestion), atopic dermatitis (a skin rash), and **asthma** — are some of the ways that your immune system might react when exposed to an allergen. The most severe form of allergic reaction is anaphylaxis.

Allergic diseases often go hand-in-hand. For example, 75% of people with atopic dermatitis (skin rash) also develop hay fever. And, close to 40% of people suffering from hay fever, and up to 50% of people with atopic dermatitis, develop asthma.

Hay fever sufferers are also more likely to suffer from sinusitis (sinus infection), otitis media (ear infection) and conjunctivitis (eye infection). Both asthma and food allergy sufferers are at increased risk of anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a rapid, immune-mediated allergic reaction that can happen after repeated exposure to fish, peanuts and latex, as well as some medications and insect stings. Symptoms, like faintness, severe difficulty breathing, throat closing, shock or seizure, usually appear within seconds or minutes after contact with the allergen, but can be delayed for up to two hours. Anaphylaxis is always a medical emergency!



Is it a Cold...or Allergies?

While the symptoms of colds and allergies are very similar, the two illnesses are actually quite different.

Colds are caused by viruses, which are typically transmitted person-to-person by contact with infected saliva or nasal discharge. Allergies are an immune response to otherwise harmless particles in the environment. Therefore, a key difference between colds and allergies is that colds are contagious and allergies are not.

See your doctor if you have a respiratory illness that lasts for more than a week or two.



Colds and allergies have very similar symptoms: runny nose, nagging cough, and sneezing. However, with a cold, nasal discharge is usually thick and yellow or green. With an allergy, it runs thin and clear.

Also, with a cold, the sneezing and runny nose start up the first day and usually last about a week. Allergy symptoms can last a week, a month, or continue all year round, depending on which allergen — or combination of allergens — is causing your symptoms.

Your health care professional can help determine whether you have a cold or allergies and the best treatment options available to you.



Who Gets Allergies?

Allergies can develop any time, at any age. However, the apple rarely falls very far from the tree. If your family has a history of allergies — particularly inhalant or food allergies — then you are likely to develop allergies yourself, though not necessarily to the same substances.

The medical term for this genetic predisposition is “atopy,” or the tendency to develop an [immune-mediated reaction](#) to common allergens. Children, with their immature immune systems, are most vulnerable to developing allergies.

Reducing your exposure to [allergens in your home](#) is important because, when allergies run in the family, the risk of developing them increases after repeated exposure to allergens. Lifestyle factors may also increase your risk for developing allergies. They include: growing up in a small family, using antibiotics early in life, living a Western lifestyle, eating certain foods, and exposure to passive smoke.

Exposure to allergens during times when your body’s defenses are lowered or weakened — such as after a viral infection or during a pregnancy — may also contribute to the development of allergies.

Allergic Disease on the Rise

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology ([AAAAI](#)) allergies are on the rise. Allergies affect between 40 and 50 million people in the US, with between 30% of adults and 40% of children suffering from the itchy eyes and nasal congestion commonly called “hay fever.” That’s up more than 30% in the past 10 years, an increase too dramatic to be caused by genetic changes.

All in the Family
While the development of allergic disease involves both genetic and environmental factors, family history is the single most important factor. If one of your parents has allergies, then you have a 48% risk of developing allergies. Your risk grows to 70% or more if both of your parents have them.



Theories About

Just exactly why allergic disease is becoming more common is the subject of debate and speculation. For example, there is the “bored immune system” theory, which suggests that modern sanitation practices and antibiotics have left our immune systems with little to do, so it attacks harmless particles that enter the body. This might help explain why people living in Eastern Russia, India, Indonesia, and rural Africa report far less trouble with allergies, despite their wealth of resident allergy triggers.



Others suggest that we are now spending far more time cooped up indoors with allergens. We currently spend about 90% of our time indoors with the pets, molds and dust mites that cause allergic reactions, which is why [controlling allergens](#) in your home is so important to allergy prevention and management.

Other factors being researched include warmer homes, wall-to-wall carpeting, changes in diet, declines in breast-feeding rates and physical activity, and exposure to diesel particulates and secondhand cigarette smoke.

After the Berlin Wall fell, researchers in Germany found that children living in the grimy city of Leipzig had half as many allergies as children in cleaner West German cities. They also found that children who had serious bacterial infections during early childhood, and children who were born to large families, were less likely to develop allergies. Which suggests that traditional lifestyles may somehow be “protective” against allergies.

Of course, you shouldn’t be willing to forego the advantages of proper hygiene and immunizations to avoid allergies. Researchers in Africa did find that measles may protect against allergies. However, 25% of children who contracted measles during the study died of the disease.

Molecular biologists are currently looking for ways to confer the benefits of “dirty living” without the risks, through vaccines and diet.

The Asthma-Allergy Connection

Up to 78% of people with asthma also suffer from inhalant allergies. This is not too surprising because when you're congested, you tend to breathe out of your mouth. Mouth-breathing bypasses the air conditioning function of the nose. The result? You inhale relatively cold, dry, allergen- and pollutant-filled air directly into your lungs, irritants that can trigger asthma.

Symptoms of [asthma](#) include coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing.

Not everyone with asthma has allergies. And not everyone with allergies develops asthma. It's likely that the two conditions have a common cause rather than one causing the other.

Like allergies, asthma runs in families. Children with one asthmatic parent have three to six times the rate of developing asthma than other kids. Kids with two wheezing parents have 10 times the risk.

The primary allergens that trigger asthma in the home are dust mites and cockroaches. Pet dander can also be a problem. Importantly,

Did you know?

Asthma now afflicts some 14 million Americans — about double the rate seen just two decades ago. Nearly one in 10 American kids has asthma — which makes asthma the most common chronic disease of childhood.



Common Asthma Triggers

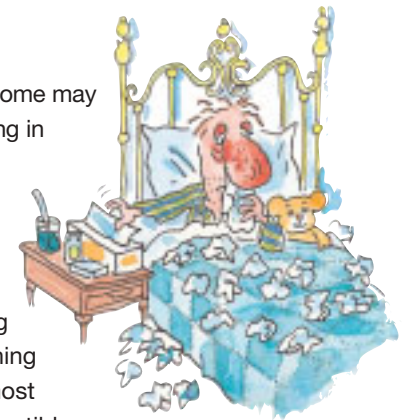
- [Allergens](#)
- Exercise
- Stress
- Medications or foods
- Colds and respiratory infections
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- Irritants, such as smoke, vapors, ozone, perfumes, cooking and household cleaner fumes, changing weather conditions

controlling these allergens in your home may help prevent asthma from developing in family members who are [sensitized](#) but do not yet have the disease.

Incidentally, if you suffer from exercise-induced asthma, it's not the physical activity that is causing your attacks. It's the mouth-breathing to get adequate air. Fortunately, most nasal allergy medications are compatible with asthma medications. Some — including antihistamines, decongestants, and nasal corticosteroid sprays — have even been shown to improve asthma.

Controlling asthma triggers — including [seasonal](#) and [perennial](#) (year-round) allergies — is an important part of asthma management. A child whose allergies aren't controlled has a greater chance of developing asthma than a child whose allergies are controlled. With very little effort you can make a surprising difference in your environment, the severity of symptoms, and the number of acute attacks.

Even though asthma can be deadly, the symptoms are easily managed with proper attention to diet, exercise, environment, stress, and medications. Talk with your doctor about the best management and treatment options for you.



Quit for Your Kid's Sake

Children born to mothers who smoke or who live with a smoker have much higher incidences of asthma and respiratory infections than children living in smoke-free homes.



Diagnosing Household Allergies

An allergy or immunology specialist can help determine whether your itchy eyes and runny nose are caused by household allergies.

History

Since allergies run in families, your doctor will want to know if either of your parents, brothers, or sisters are allergy sufferers, or if you or they had a history of atopic dermatitis, asthma, or colic in infancy.

Your doctor will also want to know when your allergy symptoms seem to flare up. Are they related to certain seasons or months of the year? Or are you bothered by them all year round? Completing the [Allergy Symptom Log](#) on the next page can help identify these kinds of patterns.

Physical Examination

The physical examination will primarily involve your nose, eyes, throat and ears, but will also include your lungs and skin. Often, allergy symptoms are as plain as the nose on your face. So your doctor will also be looking for:

- Repeated nose wiggling, wiping, and pushing up
- A nose crease
- “Allergic shiners,” a darkening under the eyes
- Mouth breathing

You might also be asked to breathe into a “peak flow meter” or “spirometer,” a device that objectively measures lung function and helps diagnose [asthma](#).

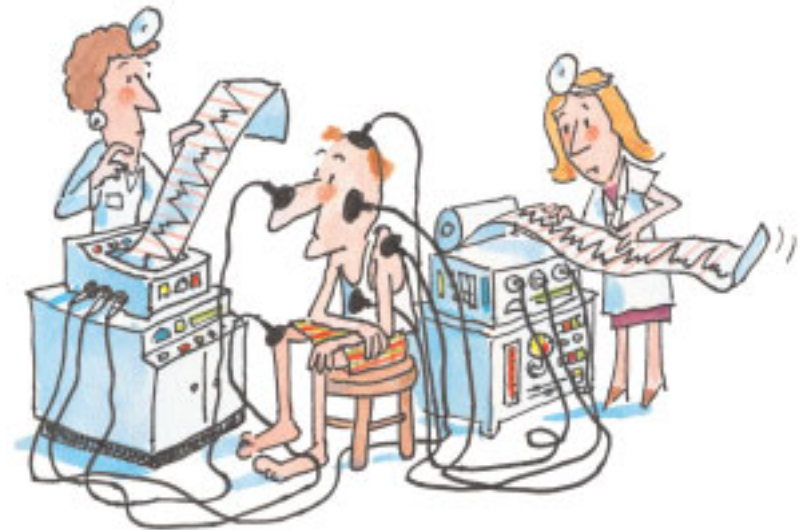
Diagnostic Testing

The most common allergy test in the US is prick/puncture testing. This test helps your doctor:

- Confirm your symptoms are indeed caused by an allergy and not another illness,
- Identify the specific allergens that you are sensitive to (including those you might not have expected), and
- Guide your management and treatment.

Since medicines, such as antihistamines and antidepressants, can effect test results, your doctor will likely ask you to stop taking them 72 hours to one week before testing.

Once your sensitivity to specific allergens has been confirmed, your doctor can offer specific suggestions for [relieving](#) discomfort and/or [preventing](#) flare ups all together.



Meet the Common Household Allergens

Allergies can either be [seasonal](#), [perennial](#) (year round), or *both* depending on the type and number of allergies that you have. People who have allergies are often sensitive to more than one substance.

The common household allergens include [dust mite](#) and [cockroach](#) droppings, [animal dander](#), [mold spores](#) and [plant pollens](#).

Perennial Allergies

Perennial or “household” allergies are triggered by indoor allergens, including [dust mite](#) and [cockroach droppings](#), [animal dander](#), and [mold spores](#). Many household allergy sufferers find the winter months — when we tend to be indoors most of the time — to be the peak season for their runny nose and congestion.

Living Room

- Remove plants and firewood, where mold spores live.
- Close windows against outdoor pollen.
- Leather and vinyl furniture deter dust mites.

Wear a mask when dusting and vacuuming, or have someone who's not allergic do the cleaning.



Bathroom

- An exhaust fan reduces moisture and mold.
- Fix plumbing leaks.
- Scrub bathroom with bleach or mildew remover.

Since the greatest portion of our time at home is spent sleeping, focus your allergen control efforts in your family's bedrooms.



Bedroom

- Remove heavy fabrics, carpeting and clutter.
- Dust often with a damp cloth or oiled mop.
- Use rolled-up shades or washable curtains instead of blinds or heavy drapery.
- Wash linens weekly in hot water of at least 130°F.
- Encase bedding in anti-allergen covers.
- Keep pets out — and especially off beds.
- Keep clothes picked up — put away in a dresser or closet.

Kitchen

- Wash dishes immediately after use in hot sudsy water.
- Store food in air-tight containers and take out the garbage.
- Clean crumbs out from the toaster and from under large appliances.
- Put away your pet's water bowl at night.

Basement

- Humidity should be kept at 45 percent or lower.
- Replace carpeting with hard flooring and washable rugs.
- Clean and replace HVAC filters regularly.
- Seal cracks and crevices where roaches could enter.

Seasonal Allergies

During the growing seasons, freshly cut grass and blooming flowers wreak havoc on the 1 in 5 Americans who suffer from seasonal allergies. The dampness of spring and colorful piles of leaves in the fall can also trigger mold spore allergies, as can the shredded barks and mulches used in today's gardens.

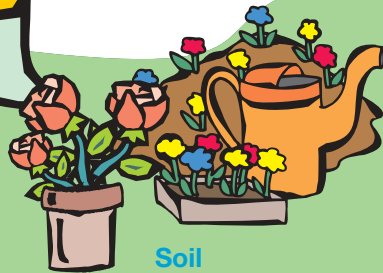
Rain

- Rain causes small allergen mold spores to "bloom." Staying indoors may be your only defense.



Pollen

- Pollen becomes a household allergen when it is brought into your home on your family's clothes and pet's fur.
- The pollen of brightly colored, perfumed flowers – like roses – don't usually cause allergy symptoms.



Soil

- Molds live in the soil, on compost, damp vegetation and garden mulches.

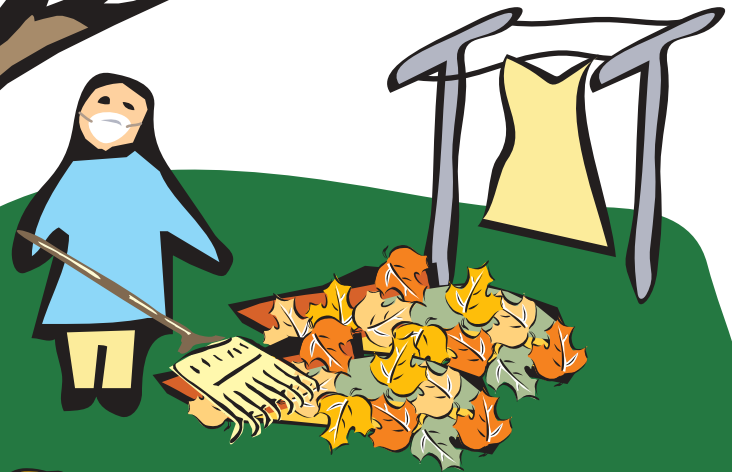


Winter is the peak season for respiratory infections. Keeping allergens under control can give your immune system a fighting chance when these ailments come to call.



Outdoor Activities

- Use a clothes dryer instead of hanging your clothes on a line.
- If you have allergies, delegate yard work or wear a tightly fitting disposable dust mask and shower immediately after.



Dust Mite Droppings

Don't look now, but tiny, 8-legged creatures from the spider family — called dust mites — have invaded your bedding, upholstered furniture and carpeting and could be making you sick. Your house may look clean, but they're in there, feeding on skin scales from the humans and animals living in your home. A protein enzyme in their fecal waste causes the allergic reaction.

You know that warm shaft of afternoon sunlight with tiny particles dancing in it?

Littered with dust mite waste and other allergens.

Do you have a six-year-old pillow?

Up to 10% of its weight could be dust mite droppings and decaying dust mite bodies.

Researchers have linked dust mite allergen sensitivity to dust mite exposure early in life. Which means that aggressively controlling dust mites in your home now may help [delay sensitization](#) and reduce your children's risk of developing this annoying allergy in the future. Since allergies can trigger [asthma](#), reducing dust mite exposure now may also help reduce their risk of developing allergic asthma later on as well.



Housework Make You Sick?

If you are the allergy sufferer in your home, let someone else do the dusting and vacuuming. If you must do these dusty chores, be sure to protect yourself with a disposable dust mask.

Controlling Dust Mite Allergens

It would be impossible to completely rid your home of these pesky creatures and their debris because dust mites are carried into your house everyday on your body and clothing. They live for three months and reproduce rapidly. Each one lays hundreds of eggs during its lifetime.

Therefore, your efforts should focus on control — continuously reducing the concentration of dust mite allergens in your home. Pay special attention to the bedrooms.

Use roll up shades or washable curtains rather than dust-collecting blinds or heavy drapery. Replace wall-to-wall carpeting with hardwood, tile or linoleum with washable throw rugs. Remove dust-collecting knick-knacks, books and stuffed animals. Keep all clothing in a closet with the door shut.

Cover mattresses and pillows with special allergen-proof casings. Use washable blankets and synthetic pillows instead of wool or down-filled comforters and feather pillows. Wash sheets, pillows and blankets in hot water (130°F) one a week. If you prefer to keep your hot water heater at a lower setting, try the very hot water washers and high heat setting dryers at your neighborhood laundromat.

Dust often with a damp cloth or oiled mop. Vacuum weekly with a high-efficiency [vacuum cleaner](#) specially designed for allergen control. Sprinkle on a [dust mite-killing acaricide](#) before vacuuming carpeting.

BISSELL
Solution

BISSELL Acarosan® Dust Mite Powder kills dust mites and, when used prior to vacuuming or deep cleaning, helps remove allergy-causing dust mite wastes.

Cockroach Droppings

Just like dust mites, some people are allergic to a protein found in cockroach droppings. This protein is also a primary trigger of asthma. Cockroach allergies alone may account for the higher asthma rates seen in urban neighborhoods as compared to suburban and rural areas.

Cockroaches live in warm, tropical climates (like the southern US) and in densely populated urban neighborhoods. They live in homes owned by all ethnic groups and economic classes of people. Since cockroaches often are brought into the home through our daily activities, even impeccable housekeeping standards will not keep them out. However, ready access to food, water and shelter in a cluttered, dirty home, are an open invitation to stay and multiply.

Cockroaches are extremely hardy creatures. They can survive for long periods of time without food or water. They thrive on just a single drop of water and a few crumbs each day. Each species has a unique [life cycle, behavior and habitat](#). You'll need some basic knowledge before attempting any [control tactics](#).

Paper or Plastic?

Paper grocery bags stored next to the refrigerator create the perfect breeding site for some types of cockroaches — warm layers of porous material near a source of high humidity and food. If you're battling cockroaches, switch to plastic!



Controlling Cockroach Allergens

The best defense against cockroach allergies is to rid your home of the little buggers that cause them. Use traps or poison and be sure to dispose of the dead ones as well. You could also call a professional exterminator.

Once they have been eliminated, block off cracks and crevices where new cockroaches could enter your home. They need water to survive and prefer high humidity, so be sure to fix any leaky pipes or faucets.

Cockroaches generally feel less welcome in a clean, dry house. Pay particular attention to the kitchen. Wash dishes immediately after use in hot, sudsy water. Store food in sturdy, air-tight containers. Sweep the floor after every meal. Be sure to clean out crumbs from the toaster and from under the stove and refrigerator. Rinse sponges and dishrags in ammonia water, then store them in Ziploc bags. Keep garbage and recycling in containers with tight lids. Don't allow food in your bedrooms.

Cockroaches are easily transported. If you are moving from or to a home in an area with cold winters, leave your belongings in an unheated truck overnight in below-freezing temperatures. Or, unpack your boxes outdoors or in garage and use a fogger to kill any uninvited "guests."

BISSELL Solution

A vacuum cleaner with a 3M Filtrete filtration system, such as the **BISSELL Lift-Off**, will remove many of the indoor allergens that cause allergy symptoms.

The "[Cockroach Control Manual](#)," offered by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, is an easy-to-read guide that features formulations and application techniques — from most to least toxic—for different types of cockroach infestations.

Animal Dander

Animal dander allergies are triggered by proteins found in the saliva, urine and dried-skin flakes of dogs, cats and rodents — not the actual fur as many people believe. During grooming, animals coat their skin with a thin layer of these proteins, which later dries and is shed as a fine, light-weight dust that spreads throughout the house.

It may not be your kitty “Mittens” causing your allergies, but the pollen and mold spores carried in on her fur. An allergist can help pinpoint the source of your misery.



These proteins can remain for months after a pet has been removed from the home. Cat allergen proteins are especially sticky. They will cling to walls, hands and clothing. You can carry them home on your body or clothing after visiting a friend who owns a cat. Children can even bring them home after interacting with a cat-owning child at school.

People with [asthma](#) are especially susceptible to pet allergies. For some people, pet allergy symptoms can build to a peak 8 to 12 hours after exposure to an animal. Since pet allergen [sensitivity](#) can take more than two years to develop, it’s not uncommon to develop an allergic reaction to a pet that has been a member of the family for years.

Imagine the Possibilities!

Since all dogs and cats have saliva, urine and dander, there’s no such thing as a “hypoallergenic” breed. However, your family might really enjoy a pet turtle, hermit crab, fish, snake or other animals without fur or feathers.



Avoiding Animal Dander Allergens

Sadly, the most effective treatment for pet allergies is avoidance which, in severe cases, usually means finding a new home for “Sparky.” [Immunotherapy](#) may help, but appears to work best during occasional, unavoidable exposures, such as visits to grandma’s house. It is not recommended for people living with pets.

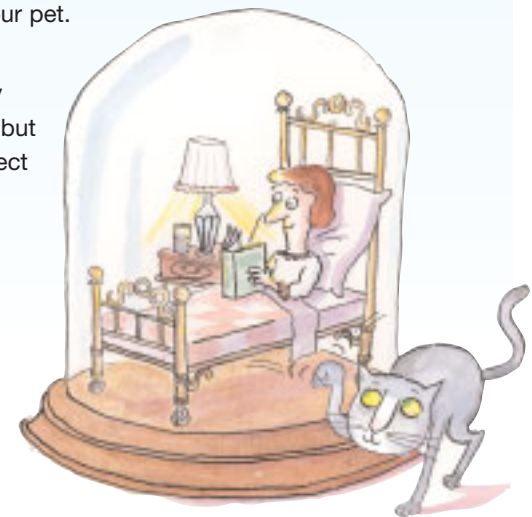
For milder pet allergies creating “safe rooms” can help. These are rooms where furry pets are not allowed, such as the bedroom of the allergy sufferer. In addition, cover the vents to the rooms with filters to trap dander before it enters. Remove carpets and cloth furniture that can harbor dander, and vacuum and dust often.

BISSELL
Solution

BISSELL [Acarosan® Dust Mite Powder](#) kills dust mites and, when used prior to vacuuming or deep cleaning, helps remove allergy-causing dust mite wastes.

Other suggestions:

- Keep your pet outdoors whenever possible.
- Make it a policy for everyone to wash their hands after petting or playing with your pet.
- Bathing your pet weekly can briefly reduce allergens, but the temporary effect is probably not worth the trouble.



Mold Spores

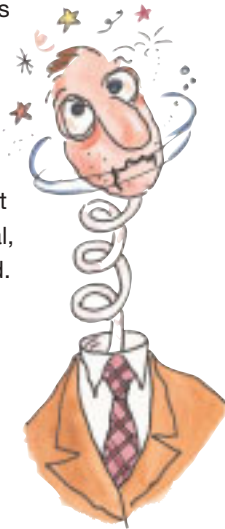
Yes, there are fungus among us—specifically moisture-loving molds. Their seeds, which differ in size, shape and color among species, are called spores. Mold spores are a common allergen and grow easily in damp areas inside and out.

Indoors, molds grow in damp places like basements, bathrooms, laundry rooms, air conditioners, vaporizers, humidifiers, and garbage pails. Molds can also be found on fabrics, rugs, stuffed animals and behind wallpaper, as well as any place where fresh food is stored. Basement carpeting, carpet padding—and anything on them—easily become moldy.

Outdoors, molds live in the soil, on compost, and on damp vegetation. In the fall, molds grow on rotting logs and fallen leaves, especially in moist, shady areas. In gardens, they can be found in mulches and certain grasses and weeds. Outdoor molds can be brought into the home on your clothes and body or through an open window.

Many of the common outdoor mold allergens are the dry spore type—they release their spores during dry, windy weather. Rain washes larger spores out of the air, but causes the smaller common allergen spores to be released in the air.

Outdoor mold allergies are seasonal—from spring to late fall, peaking from July to late summer. Unlike pollens, molds survive the first killing frost. Indoor mold allergies are perennial, causing troublesome symptoms all year round.



Controlling and Avoiding Mold Spore Allergens

Like dust mite allergens, mold spores are difficult to completely eliminate. Therefore, your efforts indoors should focus on controlling them by keeping your house as clean, cool and dry.

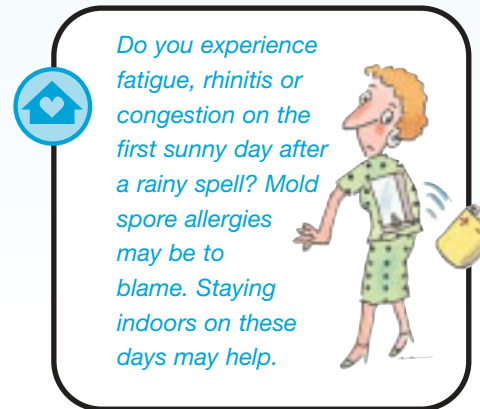
“Wet” rooms — bathrooms, kitchens and laundry rooms — need regular attention. Use a mixture of bleach and water to clean moldy walls and surfaces. Scrub your shower curtain with bleach or mildew remover. Squeegee dry stall walls after every shower. Fix leaky faucets, pipes and drains.

Molds also thrive in damp, dark basements. Replace any carpeting with an easy-to-clean, hard floor covering and washable rugs. Toss any moldy or mildewed books, toys, boxes, clothes and shoes. Store firewood outside.

During the moist, warm summer months, keep the relative humidity in your home below 50%. Dehumidifiers can help remove excess moisture from the air, especially in the basement. But be sure to empty and clean the reservoir regularly to prevent mildew from growing there, too.

Outdoors, avoidance is your best defense. If you have mold allergies, let someone else mow the lawn, rake the leaves, and spread the garden mulch.

If you can't delegate these chores, wear a tightly fitting, disposable dust mask and shower immediately afterward.



Plant Pollens

Plant pollens — the small, round-shaped male cells of trees, grasses and weeds that fertilize other plants—are the most common allergens. Plain-looking plants (tree, grasses, and weeds) are the worst offenders because they produce small, light, dry pollen granules. Brightly colored, perfumed flowers are less likely to cause allergic reactions because their pollen is too large, heavy, and sticky to travel freely in the air.

Trees pollinate earliest, followed by grasses, then weeds. If you are allergic to one kind of pollen, you very well could be allergic to many other kinds, too. This can result in a seemingly endless cycle of suffering as the seasons change and different types of pollen are released in your area. Thankfully, pollens vanish after the first hard frost in most areas.

Often people with hay fever have increased [asthma](#) symptoms during pollen seasons because hay fever and asthma share common passageways and both involve inflammation. For the same reason, [exercise-induced asthma](#) can also become a problem during pollen seasons. With appropriate medications and guidance from your doctor, you can control your asthma and enjoy strenuous activities out-of-doors during pollen seasons.

Some people hope that moving to a southwestern state will “cure” their pollen allergies or asthma. While they may find temporary relief, in a short period of time, new allergies to plants in the new local could develop. You can’t run away from your allergies or asthma.



BISSELL Solution

The new **BISSELL PowerGlide™ Ultra Upright Vacuum**, with patented Filtrete® bags and filters, captures over 99% of dust mites and common pollen allergens during regular vacuuming.

Minimizing Pollen Allergens

Pollen counts tend to be highest in the early morning and late afternoon on warm, dry, breezy days and lowest during chilly, wet periods. So minimize pollen allergies by voiding strenuous outdoor activities during these times. If you must be outside when pollen counts are high, wear a mask specially designed to filter pollen allergens.

Consider scheduling your vacation for the height of pollen season and choose a location — like the seashore — where pollen exposure would be minimal.

Tempted to throw open the windows and air out the house on the first days of spring? Don’t do it if you are troubled by pollen or mold allergies! Fresh spring breezes are teaming with allergens that will contaminate the indoor air and make you miserable.

Other suggestions:

- Wash your hair before going to bed at night.
- Use a clothes dryer instead of hanging your wash on line outside.
- Clean and replace your air conditioner filters regularly.

High-quality 3M® Filtrete Filtration Technology and HEPA filters — when installed as part of your home’s heating and air conditioning systems — continually clean the air by removing dust, pollen, mold and animal dander.



Allergy Prevention and Relief

Even though you can't change your genetic predisposition to allergies, and it's too late to do anything about your early childhood exposure to allergens, you can still try to prevent future sensitization — and sensitization in your children. The key is to minimize contact with allergens in your daily life.

Start by taking our quick [Allergy Prevention Quiz](#) to uncover allergens lurking in your home. Then, read on for simple, practical measures that can help make your home less allergenic and healthier for you and your family.

Yes, reducing indoor allergens takes time and effort. But with thorough spring cleaning, indoor air cleaning, and other measures, you can create a home that is less allergenic and healthier for your family. A certified allergist or immunologist can help you identify other ways to help reduce your risk and relieve your discomfort.



Allergy Prevention Quiz

Wondering if you might have some common household allergies? Take our quick quiz and find out.

- | | Yes | No | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have pets with fur?
_____ |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | If you have them, do they sleep in your room?
_____ |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have carpeting, draperies and upholstered furniture in your home – particularly in your bedroom?
_____ |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you wash your bed linens <i>less often</i> than once a week?
_____ |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are your ceiling, walls or windows discolored by moisture or mold?
_____ |
| 6. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is your basement wet or water-damaged?
_____ |
| 7. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does your home have a musty or moldy odor?
_____ |

- | | Yes | No | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 8. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you live in a humid climate or use humidifiers in your home?
_____ |
| 9. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you keep your home over 68°F?
_____ |
| 10. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you prefer fresh air through open windows rather than using an air conditioner?
_____ |
| 11. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does anyone in your home smoke?
_____ |
| 12. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have you ever seen cockroaches or other insects or rodents in your home?
_____ |

A “yes” answer to any of the above questions, may mean that your house is also home to one or more of the common household allergens.



AAAAI Allergy Prevention Strategy

The American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) recommends the following three-prong approach to allergy prevention.

- 1) **Prevent Sensitization:** If at all possible, you want to prevent sensitization and immune system response to allergens in the first place. This is especially important if allergies run in the family, but your immune system does not yet over-react to allergens.
- 2) **Delay Response:** Some people may be sensitive to allergens from previous exposures, but do not have an [allergic disease](#) yet. Or they only have one (e.g., atopic dermatitis), but not others (e.g. rhinitis, asthma). In this case, minimizing exposure to allergens is important because repeated contact with allergens increases your risk for developing multiple allergic diseases.
- 3) **Control Your Symptoms:** Even if it is too late for you, and you already suffer from two or more allergic diseases, you can still get relief by controlling the factors in your life that cause allergic symptoms.

The good news is that allergies *can* be controlled. With preparation and planning, your allergies don't have to limit your daily activities.



Prevent Sensitization

Ideally, you want to prevent sensitization to allergens in the first place. For most adults, it may be too late. If you have a [family history](#) of allergies, it may be difficult. However, several factors seem to reduce a young child's risk for sensitization. They include:

- Breast feeding
- Delaying introduction of "at risk" foods (milk products, eggs, peanuts)
- Contact with dust mite waste or droppings, animal dander and pollen at an early age
- Living in a rural or suburban location
- Avoiding areas with high pollution levels
- Avoiding passive exposure to tobacco smoke
- Early exposure to antibiotics
- Large family size
- Time spent in child care

Interestingly, researchers are finding that exposure to allergens during infancy can be protective against developing sensitivity, but only if allergies do not already run in the family. For example, studies have shown that children born during peak pollen season have a lower risk of developing pollen allergies when they get older. And, children exposed to pets and high levels of dust mites have a lower risk of developing these allergies in later life as well.

The opposite is true, however, for children with a [family history](#) of allergies. For these children, reducing exposure to allergens during the first years of life can help reduce the risk of developing allergy and asthma in later life.

Off to a Good Start
Protective antibodies in a mother's milk strengthen her baby's immune system. Breast feeding for at least 4-6 months can decrease your baby's later risks for developing allergies, respiratory infections and asthma.



Delay Response to Sensitivity

Some people are sensitive to certain allergens, but have not had that “last straw” of exposure that causes allergy symptoms. Limiting contact with allergens in their environment may prevent or delay an allergic response in these people.

Start by reducing the household allergens in the room that most of us spend our time in — our bedrooms.

- Dust and vacuum at least once a week
- Wash bedding once a week in hot water
- Encase pillows and mattresses in mite-impermeable covers
- Limit stuffed animals and keep them off the beds
- Limit dust-collecting clutter and knick-knacks
- Move upholstered furniture out of the bedrooms
- Remove draperies, use washable blinds or shades instead
- Replace wall-to-wall carpeting with hardwood, vinyl or tile
- Keep pets out of the bedrooms
- Cover bedroom air vents with cheesecloth or other filter fabric (Clean or change these often, too.)
- Clean or change furnace and air conditioner filters once a month
- Clean walls and surfaces in “wet” rooms with bleach water
- Fix leaky faucets, pipes and drains
- Toss old newspapers, boxes, clothing and stuffed animals
- Call an exterminator at the first sign of cockroaches

If you don't have a family history of allergies, then you might not want to rip out the carpet and put down hardwood floors. But it wouldn't hurt to wash the bedding every week in hot water, remove stuffed animals from your children's beds, keep the humidity in your home below 50%, and not allow smoking in your house.

Control Your Symptoms

There are three ways to control allergy symptoms: environmentally, medically and with immunotherapy or “allergy shots.”

Environmentally

Since allergic reactions are caused by exposure to offending allergens, reducing the number of allergens in your home is the first line of defense for controlling your allergy symptoms. In other words, removing the allergens helps lessen the symptoms.

The carpeting throughout your home plays host to dust mites, pet dander and molds. If you have severe allergies, you'll want to remove all wall-to-wall carpeting from your home and replace it with hardwood, vinyl or tile flooring and washable throw rugs.

If you cannot remove the carpeting, the AAAAI recommends cleaning it often with a vacuum cleaner equipped with filters that retain 99.9% of particles 0.3 microns or larger. These specially designed filters trap most of the small allergen particles that can re-enter the air through traditional vacuum bags.

Dust your furniture, appliances, and artificial plants and trees with a damp cloth or sponge.

Washing bedding weekly in hot water is essential. However, expensive air cleaners and filters are not necessary, since mite allergens are too heavy to stay airborne for long.

(continued on page 41)

Gotcha Covered!

If you cannot live without some carpeting in your home, choose relatively short carpets—1/4 inch tall. They're easier to clean and more likely to release trapped dust and cat dander than taller carpets. Bare floors are still best, since carpeted floors trap up to 100 times the amount of cat allergen as a polished floor.



Control Your Symptoms, continued

Medically

Over-the-counter and prescription antihistamines that your allergist recommends are medical treatments that control allergy symptoms. These medications block the production of [histamine](#), the chemical in your body that causes hives, itching, and respiratory symptoms.

The older antihistamines can cause drowsiness. Newer, non-sedating prescription antihistamines block histamine without the sleepiness. While antihistamines alone cannot relieve nasal congestion, they can when paired with a prescription corticosteroid nose spray. Your doctor can tell you more.



Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is a series of injections that contain minute quantities of the offending allergen proteins. The series is given once a week, over a long period of time. Gradually the dosage of allergen is increased, which helps you build up a tolerance.

Immunotherapy can lessen symptoms for people with allergies and some people even develop long-term immunity, which means allergy relief without the shots. Immunotherapy is not a substitute for avoidance, however. If you are allergic to cats and still live with one, you will not be getting the maximum benefit from immunotherapy. Your doctor can tell you more.

Control Allergens in Your Home

Preventing allergens from entering your home in the first place would be the best way to reduce your exposure to these pesky particles. However, it's virtually impossible to live a normal life without including these uninvited guests. Instead, focus your efforts on both inhibiting dust mite reproduction and cleaning away as many other household allergens as you can. BISSELL allergen control products can help.

BISSELL Vacuums

Regular vacuuming is an essential part of allergen control in your home. Bissell has outfitted several of our most popular vacuum models with sophisticated 3M FILTRETE™ Filtration Technology. This highly effective system yields superior suction performance and prevents microscopic allergen particles from re-circulating back into the air during vacuuming. FILTRETE™ Filtration Technology is the best choice for controlling allergens in your home.

BISSELL Deep Cleaners

Thorough cleaning is one of the best ways to remove allergens from your carpet and upholstery. Bissell offers a variety of deep cleaners that are powerful enough to clean your entire house and simple enough for daily use.

BISSELL Allergen Removal Formulas

Many people with dust mite allergies just can't part with their wall-to-wall carpeting — a haven for dust mite allergens. If you are one, BISSELL allergen removal products can help.

BISSELL Vacuums

BISSELL [Lift-Off™](#) and [PowerGlide™](#) vacuums all use innovative FILTRETE™ Filtration Technology from 3M®. This patented system incorporates electrostatically charged FILTRETE™ disposable vacuum bags and FILTRETE™ exhaust filters, which work together to keep pollen, dust and other microscopic allergens from being released back in the room as you're vacuuming. Others may use high efficiency filters, but BISSELL Vacuums feature the highest quality, best performing filtration system currently available.

The American Academy of Allergy and Immunology (AAAAI) recommends using a vacuum that retains 99.97% of particles .3 micron and larger, such those using double high-efficiency particulate (HEPA) filters, and vacuum systems using 3M Filtrete™ bags and filters.



[BISSELL LIFT-OFF® Upright & Detachable Canister Vacuum](#) — which is approved by the American Lung Association — gives you the convenience of an upright and the versatility of a canister all in one vacuum. Like a traditional upright, the Lift-Off™ vacuum removes irritating allergens from both carpeting and hard surface flooring. However, the Lift-Off™ also features a unique detachable canister and upholstery hose that can be used to easily vacuum dust mite, cockroach and animal dander allergens from window coverings and furniture surfaces.

How small is "small"?

Human Hair
50 microns

Dust
25 Microns

Pollen
10 Microns

Mold Spores
5 Microns

[BISSELL PowerGlide™ Ultra Upright Vacuum](#) 12 amps of powerful, light weight — and quiet cleaning.

[\("Hear" the difference.\)](#) Seven height adjustments clean surfaces from bare floors to high pile carpet. Combine the onboard tools with the Delux Stretch Hose and you have over 10 feet of cleaning reach for those hard to clean places.

BISSELL Deep Cleaners

Vacuums, even the best ones, simply can't reach deep-down to the base of your carpet's fibers. BISSELL Deep Cleaners are specially engineered to reach the dirt and allergens that vacuums leave behind.

Cleaning your carpets with a BISSELL deep cleaner is better than shampooing because our machines force a warm cleaning mixture deep into your carpet to blast out dirt and grime as built-in brushes help root out deeply embedded dirt. At the same time, powerful suction immediately pulls out the dirt and liquid, leaving your carpet ultra-clean and pleasant smelling.

When combined with [BISSELL Multi-Allergen Removal™ Fiber Cleansing Formula](#), deep cleaning can be an effective tool in your allergen control arsenal. Our deep cleaners are so convenient and easy to use, that many owners also regularly clean furniture and automobile upholstery, stairs and mattresses with their BISSELL Deep Cleaning machines — key hiding places for household allergens.

The [BISSELL PROHeat™ CLEAR VIEW™ Plus Upright Deep Cleaner](#) is our most powerful upright machine. Most deep cleaners on the market only use hot tap water, which cools rapidly during the cleaning process. Our PROHeat™ CLEAR VIEW™ Plus, however, features an on-board heater to maintain a constant water temperature for optimum cleaning effectiveness because, simply put, heat cleans better. [Click here](#) to see the PROHeat™ CLEAR VIEW in action.

With over 20 years of experience in deep cleaning, BISSELL has a deep cleaning machine to fit any budget and any need.

BISSELL Allergen Removal Solutions

When it comes to controlling household allergens, vacuuming or deep cleaning alone are not enough. You also need the specialized cleaning power of BISSELL allergen removal products.

[BISSELL Multi-Allergen Removal™ Fiber Cleansing Formula](#) removes up to two and on-half times as many dust mite waste allergens as vacuuming. This formula, for full-size deep cleaners, cleans up to 80% of embedded dust mite waste allergens, and pet and pollen allergens. Our Multi-Allergen Removal Fiber Cleansing Formula also penetrates carpet fibers to loosen and remove deep-down dirt and stains and protects and seals fibers against re-soiling.

Between deep-cleanings, [BISSELL Acarosan® Dust Mite Powder](#) kills dust mites and helps your vacuum remove their waste and remains. When used regularly, this unique moist powder removes twice as many dust mite allergens as vacuuming alone. Just sprinkle on, brush in, and vacuum up. It's that simple.

BISSELL Acarosan® Dust Mite Powder is hypoallergenic and unscented. Children and pets can return to a treated area once it is thoroughly dry and vacuumed.

