

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

www.TheAllergyClinic.com

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Newsletter

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Let's Get Ahead of Fall and Winter Allergies!

Although pollen counts have dropped in most of California, indoor allergens such as dust mite, animal dander and mold usually start to increase this time of year -partly because many are spending more time indoors and some have started using forced air heating systems.

- **Animal Dander:** Many patients who have an allergy to animals are not just allergic to the pet's hair, fur, or feathers. Often times, they have an allergy to the protein found in the pet's dander (dead skin cells) saliva, and urine. The hair, fur, or feathers collect the dander, and also other allergens such as dust mites, mold, and pollen.
- **Dust Mites:** These microscopic insects might be the most common cause of year-round indoor allergies, according to the Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America. Dust mites are usually found in bedding (as they feed on dead skin particles), carpeting, HVAC systems and carpeting
- **Indoor Mold:** Mold and mildew can be found both indoors and outdoors and mold is more likely to grow in damp areas such as basements and bathrooms, with an increased humidity.
- **Cockroach Droppings** These pests can live anywhere, but they usually prefer dark, humid environments where they have easy access to water and food. It is therefore important to keep food in tight-lid containers and to make sure

that countertops are frequently cleaned of any food remnants.

There are several ways you can reduce your exposure to allergens in the fall/winter. Make sure that the humidity level is not above 50%, as higher humidity levels can promote the growth of dust mite and mold. Sometimes a dehumidifier may be necessary. For those with non-carpeted flooring, using a Swiffer can pick up dust and dirt most vacuum cleaners leave behind. Make sure that vacuuming is done regularly if you do have carpeting, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter. If you use a cleaning service, make sure that they use your vacuum, and not the vacuum provided by the company. Wash all bedding in hot water weekly, as cold water will not kill dust mite. Make sure that there are allergy covers over the pillows and mattress. Prior to running the forced air heating system in the home, replace the furnace filters with an electrostatic filter, such as a MERV 13 (or higher) air filter.

Make sure that you are taking your medications as prescribed, especially preventative nasal and lung sprays which will work best if used daily, rather than on an as needed basis.

If the above environmental control measures are in place, and you are taking medications as prescribed, and yet your symptoms persist, now may be the time to update the status of your environmental allergies. Based on your medical history and the results of your allergy skin testing, you can have a discussion with one of our providers about the potential risks and benefits of treating your underlying allergies with immunotherapy. This time of the year may be the ideal time to start this treatment, especially if your skin testing shows significant pollen allergies as well. If you are already on immunotherapy, we can also discuss the pros and cons of making changes to your immunotherapy vaccine to further maximize control of your symptoms.

To allow us time to celebrate with our loved ones, our San Mateo office will be closed on Thursday, November 23, and Friday, November 24. We will have extended allergy shot hours on Wednesday, November 22 from 9:00 AM-4:30 PM. Our Daly City office will be open from 10:00 AM-6:00 PM on Wednesday, November 22.