



DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P.A.

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Environmental Allergen Control

Many households have one or more members with allergy problems. There are many things you can do to keep the house free of allergens, and reduce the need for medications.

1. Cigarettes must be kept out of the house. No one should be permitted to smoke anywhere inside the house, because the heating system will spread the smoke throughout the building.
2. In bedrooms, stuffed animals and other stuffed toys should be kept in a plastic bag in the closet when not being played with. Perhaps one favorite stuffed animal may be left out, and washed periodically.
3. All live animals should be kept out of bedrooms at all times, so that dander does not settle in the rooms.
4. Pillows and mattresses should be covered with dust proof covers. These are available at department stores and through allergy product companies. Replace feather comforters and pillows with synthetic bedding.
5. Bedspreads and curtains should be washed once or twice per month.
6. Keep the windows closed, especially during seasons with high pollen and mold counts.
7. Area rugs can be sent out for cleaning every four to six months. Wall to wall rugs can be "steam cleaned" every six months, but you must turn on the furnace fan to dry the rugs quickly and avoid mold and dust mites proliferating.
8. The basement must be kept absolutely dry. If the basement smells at all musty, this means that mold is growing in the basement, which will be spread throughout the house by the furnace. Check all the outside gutters, to be sure that water drains away from the house, instead of pooling against the foundation wall. Also, a dehumidifier may be left to run constantly in the basement. (The small fan in the dehumidifier is inadequate to circulate the air

in the large basement; having a small box fan run continuously with the dehumidifier helps keep the basement dry.) After the cement walls have dried out for a few weeks, you could paint with a waterproof paint from the hardware store.

9. If you have forced air heat, attention must be paid to the furnace filters. If you have inexpensive fiberglass filters, or the more expensive high filtration replaceable filters, these should be replaced monthly. A heating contractor can install an electrostatic filter for about \$500, and this is often an excellent investment. In homes with radiator heat, a small HEPA or electrostatic filter in the bedroom may improve symptoms.