



DELAWARE MODERN PEDIATRICS, P. A.

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Environmental Allergen Control

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

1. Cigarettes are best kept out of the house. Smoking should not be permitted anywhere inside the house, because the heating system will spread the smoke throughout the building.
2. In bedrooms, stuffed animals and other stuffed toys tend to collect dust. They can 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. Cats and dogs are best kept out of bedrooms at all times, so that dander does not settle in the rooms.
4. Pillows and mattresses can 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 should turn on the furnace fan to dry the rugs quickly and avoid mold and dust mites proliferating.
8. The basement should 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 not strong enough to circulate the air in the large basement; but running a small box fan continuously with the dehumidifier helps keep the basement dry.) After the cement walls have dried out for a few weeks, you might paint them with a waterproof paint from the hardware store.

9. If you have forced air heat, attention should 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; this is often an excellent investment. In homes with radiator heat, a small HEPA or electrostatic filter in the bedroom may improve symptoms.

A little “attention to prevention” can go a long way to reduce your child’s dependence on allergy medications!