



Reducing Household Dust

Dust is a complex mixture of dead skin, soil tracked in from outdoors, fungal spores and chemicals from household products—some of which may be harmful.

Healthiest Dusting Tips

- ✓ Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter
- ✓ Wet mop or dust surfaces frequently
- ✓ Avoid chemical flame retardants
- ✓ Use high-quality air filters

Do's & Don'ts

1. Don't let dust accumulate on surfaces.

Dust itself is an allergen, and it can also contain harmful chemicals that put children particularly at risk.

2. Don't use synthetic sprays and wipes when you dust.

These products only add more potentially harmful chemicals.

3. Vacuum frequently using a vacuum fitted with a HEPA filter.

These vacuums are more efficient at trapping small particles, and will likely remove contaminants that a regular vacuum would recirculate into the air – but remember to change the filter to keep it working well. And don't forget to vacuum upholstered furniture.

4. Wet mop hard floors frequently to prevent dust from accumulating.

Dry mopping can kick up dust that simply resettles.

5. Stick to furniture made from wood and natural fibers, like cotton, down and wool.

They are naturally fire resistant and may contain fewer chemicals.

6. Wipe furniture with a microfiber or wet cloth.

Microfiber cloths work well because their smaller fibers cling to the particles. Or use a wet cotton cloth—it will grab and hold the dust better than a dry one.

7. Caulk and seal cracks and crevices to prevent dust from accumulating in hard-to-reach places.

8. Equip your heating or cooling system with high-quality filters and change them frequently to keep them working well.

9. Dust electronic equipment, a common source of chemical flame retardants, frequently.

10. Leave your shoes at the door and use a natural-fiber doormat.

11. Consider replacing foam products, like upholstered furniture, padded high-chair seats and chair cushions, made between 1970 and 2005.

These items likely contain PBDE flame retardants. If you can't replace them, try to keep the covers intact and clean them more often.

12. Choose home electronics without PBDEs.

Some manufacturers have eliminated unnecessary chemical flame retardants. Ask before you buy and support companies that have committed to going PBDE-free.

13. Clean up quickly and thoroughly when you finish a home improvement project.

These projects can involve dust from sanding or drilling, and toxic chemicals.

Dirty Details

What we call dust is a complex mixture of pet dander, fungal spores, tiny particles, soil tracked in on your feet, carpet fibers, human hair and skin. Dust itself is an allergen and it can contain harmful chemicals.

Harmful chemicals in dust come from both inside and outside your house. Indoor items like furniture, electronics, shoes, plastics and fabrics can shed chemicals, while outdoor pollutants can enter on your shoes, and through windows and doors.

As highly flammable synthetic materials have replaced less-combustible natural materials, harmful chemical flame retardants have been added to thousands of everyday products, including furniture, computers and TVs. These chemicals escape from consumer products and settle in household dust. Older homes built before 1978 may also contain lead paint, which could be a source of lead in dust.

Young children are especially at risk from dust, because their developing bodies are more vulnerable to toxic chemicals, and they ingest or inhale more dust than adults as they spend more time on the floor. They also often put their hands and toys in their mouths.

REFERENCES

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