

The “asthma & allergy friendly™” Fall Kids Bedroom Checklist

Children spend more time in their bedrooms – sleeping, playing and doing homework – than any other room in the home. The good news is that a few simple preventative steps can help children who suffer from asthma and associated allergies breathe and rest easier.

Heading into the Fall/Winter months, experts recommend that parents make a special effort to reduce bedroom allergens, mold and bacteria that can exacerbate asthma symptoms or even trigger an attack.

Follow this checklist, developed by Asthma Society of Canada experts, to help keep bedroom allergens under control:

Floors, furniture, décor

- ✦ Select hard surface floors over carpets that can retain dust and off-gas chemicals that may irritate asthma and allergy symptoms.
 - ✦ Vacuum floors, baseboards and window ledges weekly to help reduce allergens
 - ✦ Damp mop at least once a month
- ✦ Replace MDF or plastic furnishings with natural, unvarnished wood and clean frequently.
 - ✦ Vacuum with a soft brush attachment and wipe down surfaces with a damp cloth every week.
- ✦ Consider decorating with VOC free or low-VOC paints to avoid off-gassing chemicals that may affect asthma and allergy symptoms.
 - ✦ Every few months, vacuum and wash walls thoroughly to help remove allergens
- ✦ Avoid drapes in favour of sturdy, smooth roller or vertical blinds that can be vacuumed or washed down on a weekly basis.

Bedding

- Dust mites are tiny insects that thrive in mattresses, pillows, duvets and bed sheets. Many people who have asthma are allergic to the microscopic feces the tiny mites produce.
 - ✦ Select asthma & allergy friendly™ certified pillows and duvets which feature a tightly woven outer fabric that acts as a barrier to dust mites, are manufactured from materials that do not contain chemicals at levels known to trigger asthma or allergic symptoms and are constructed to withstand repeated washing.
 - ✦ Protect mattresses, duvets and pillows with asthma & allergy friendly™ certified encasements.
 - ✦ Regular washing is important to keep allergen levels low in bedding products. Every asthma & allergy friendly™ certified bedding product comes with customized washing instructions telling you how and when to

wash your bedding to keep allergen levels low. General recommendations for bedding, that has not been certified, include frequent, high temperature washing and drying.

- ✦ Experts agree that pillows should be replaced every two years – and if you notice your child seems wheezy and congested in the morning, it might be time to change the bedding and also see your doctor!
- ✦ Select high quality, cotton sheets with heavy-duty stitching to withstand frequent, high-temperature washes. Experts agree that sheets should be changed and laundered at least once or twice a week at the hottest temperature setting.
- ✦ Always look for the asthma & allergy friendly™ certification mark to be sure that the bedding has an effective allergen barrier component, was manufactured without using chemicals at levels that may trigger asthma and allergy symptoms and was constructed to withstand repeated washing.
 - ✦ asthma & allergy friendly™ bedding is affordable and widely available at most national retailers, including: Sears, The Bay Distinctly Home, Home Outfitters Healthy Home and Wal-Mart's Breatheclear line.
 - ✦ all asthma & allergy friendly™ certified bedding products are made with customized care codes that provide laundering instructions that will help keep allergen levels low under normal conditions of use.

Making the Bed – Keeping Asthma and Allergies in Mind

- ✦ Dust mites thrive in humid conditions; so when you make your child's bed, shake out the bedding and fold back the covers to let the bed air throughout the day.
- ✦ Vacuum your child's bedroom at least once a week and wait two hours before changing the bed sheets. This is the length of time it takes for dust and debris to settle after a carpet has been vacuumed and you do not want dust to settle on a freshly made bed! The allergen load in the carpet and air is significantly reduced when using an asthma & allergy friendly™ certified Dyson upright vacuum cleaner.
- ✦ Change bed linens once or twice a week – and take a few minutes to vacuum the mattress, pillows and comforter to help reduce dust mite feces, dead skin cells and other allergens that can exacerbate symptoms.
- ✦ Keep headboards and bedside tables dust-free and damp mop once or twice a month.

Toys

- ✦ Dust mites accumulate in plush toys so efforts should be made to minimize this. The Asthma Society of Canada recommends placing plush toys in a freezer bag and freeze for 12 hours followed by a cold/warm machine wash and dry cycle at least once a month.