

TODAY'S FUTURE

National Folic Acid
Awareness Week
(second week of January)

Eating folic acid can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. Women of childbearing age should take a multivitamin with folic acid every day. To learn more about this awareness week, check out [National Council on Folic Acid's website](http://www.folicacidinfo.org).
<http://www.folicacidinfo.org>



Physical Activity is Important for Children & Adults of All Ages

Being active as a family can benefit everyone. Adults need 2½ hours a week of physical activity, and children need 60 minutes a day. Here are a few tips to add activity to your family's busy schedule.

- **Set specific activity times:** Determine time slots throughout the week when the whole family is available. Try doing something active after dinner or begin the weekend with a Saturday morning walk.
- **Turn off the TV:** Set a rule that no one can spend longer than 2 hours per day playing video games, watching TV, and using the computer.
- **Plan for all weather conditions:** Choose some activities that do not depend on the weather conditions. Try mall walking, indoor swimming, or active video games.

Source: [Be An Active Family](#) from USDA's [ChooseMyPlate](#).

No More Whining!

Whining – it's got to be the most aggravating thing a child can do. It definitely gets the attention of adults – parents and caregivers alike. And that's why children whine – to get an adult's attention!

Toddlers and preschoolers haven't yet learned words or vocabulary to express their feelings, needs, and wants. But they can vocalize. When a child gets frustrated because they are not being understood by the parent or caregiver, they often resort to whining. Most often, this age of child doesn't know they are whining...it is not a conscious strategy. What they do know is that this behavior usually results in attention from the adult, thus making it a learned behavior that parents and caregivers have actually (although unintentionally) help to reinforce.

So, how do you stop whining? First, keep in mind that when a toddler or a preschooler begins to whine, it usually indicates that the adult has not focused attention on the child when they are behaving appropriately. To avoid whining, parents and caregivers want to be responsive to the child's first bid for attention. As children then, begin to whine, the most important part of a

response from a parent is patience. Take a deep breath and remind yourself that the child is not trying to be irritating, but is asking for attention. Then, a helpful response might be to respond with "I" statements and the way you would like your child to speak. For instance, "I don't like it when you whine. If you want your teddy bear, please ask like this"...then model the words and tone of voice you would like the child to use. Or you can make a game of it....say, "Whining sounds like this..." and model how your child sounded. Then you can say, "Saying it like this sounds better, don't you think so?" Not only have you taught your child another way to ask for things, but you have provided focused attention and maybe laugh together. Please be very careful, though, not to ridicule your child for their behavior. In the long run, parents and caregivers need to reflect upon the underlying reasons for the whining. Has there been changes in routines, schedules, or other aspects of your life needing your attention? Children who whine are often sending the message that it is time to re-connect to you.

Author: Leslie Crandall, Extension Educator

House Dust Mites

House dust mites are found in nearly every home. These tiny mites can't be seen with the naked eye. They don't bite, burrow or live in our skin and hair follicles.

So What's the Big Deal? People can be allergic to the tiny feces and body fragments of dust mites which are part of what makes up the dust found in our homes. These tiny particles can easily become airborne and inhaled. Symptoms associated with dust mite allergies includes sneezing, itchy, watery eyes, nasal stuffiness, runny nose, stuffy ears, respiratory problems, eczema and in severe cases, asthma. Keep in mind, dust in our homes also contains other allergens. If you want to know if you are allergic to dust mites, a medical doctor trained to treat allergies should be consulted.

Life Cycle - The entire life cycle of a dust mite from egg to adult takes about 3–4 weeks. The mites feed on the human skin scales shed from our bodies, pollen, fungi, bacteria and animal dander. Dust mites don't need to drink water to survive. Their bodies absorb water from the air and in the environment.

Dust mites need warm temperatures (75–80°F) and high humidity (70–80 percent) to thrive. One study reported when humidity levels are 60 percent or lower, the mite population stops growing and dies out.

We make food for dust mites because our bodies continually shed skin. We lose about 1/5 ounce of dead skin each week. We also spend about one-third of our lives sleeping so it makes sense dust mites are found in bedrooms, especially in bedding and mattresses. Dust mites also eat animal dander so you'll also find them where our pets are sleeping.

What You Can Do to Manage Dust Mites

Lower humidity: Reduce humidity levels in your home to less than 50 percent, especially in the bedroom. This is easier to do in the winter time. A study showed using an electric blanket for eight hours a day reduced mites by 50 percent in one month.

Avoid sleeping near furry or feathered pets: Just like humans, pet dander is a food source for mites. If you have pets and suffer from allergies, have your pets sleep as far away from your sleeping area as possible. Make sure pet sleeping areas can be cleaned easily. Hardwood or vinyl floors with washable area rugs are recommended.

Reduce air infiltration: Pollen is another allergen and can be food for dust mites. Keep windows closed and in good repair to reduce air flow into the home.

Cleaning: Wash your bedding weekly in warm water (77°F). If you can't launder your blankets, dry clean them once a year. For non-washable carpets, shampoo, steam clean once a year.

Choose furniture carefully: Avoid furniture that can collect dust. Avoid wool fabrics and rugs because wool sheds. Use washable curtains and rugs. If you have dust mite allergies, avoid wall-to-wall carpeting. If you can't replace carpet, steam clean your carpet each spring at a minimum. Enclose mattresses and pillows in mattress encasements.

Vacuum:

This is the most important tool to manage house dust and dust mites. It is better to vacuum thoroughly once a week rather than lightly each day. Vacuum mattresses and padded furniture thoroughly — at least 20 minutes each.

Dusting: Dust your furniture before vacuuming. Spray furniture polish/dust liquid directly on surfaces reduces airborne particles by 93 percent compared with dry dusting.

Chemicals: Consider only non-chemical controls especially around people with serious allergies. Cleaning and non-toxic approaches should give you protection from dust mites unless you live in very humid, tropical regions of the world.