Environmental Controls and Preventive Measures

The first approach to dealing with specific allergens or allergic triggers is to try and reduce your exposure by modifying your environment. The following information contains suggestions for reducing allergy exposure in your environment.

Pollen Avoidance
- Keep windows closed at peak pollen times.
- Wear glasses or sunglasses to prevent pollens entering the eyes.
- Do not cut grass yourself, and if you do, wear a pollen mask.
- Use air-conditioning if possible.

Pet Allergen Avoidance
- If possible, find another home for the pet, and do not bring new animals into the home.
- Exclude pets from bedrooms and if possible keep pets outdoors.
- Vacuum carpets, mattresses and upholstery regularly.
- Change clothes after attending your horse/cat/dog.
- Bath your pet regularly (twice a week will greatly reduce pet dander).
- Do not allow pets in the bedroom.

Mold Allergen Avoidance

Indoors:
- Use dehumidifiers in the home to keep relative humidity less than 50%.
- Ensure heating, ventilation or air-conditions systems are properly maintained.
- Use 5% ammonia solution or 10% bleach solution to remove mold from bathrooms and other contaminated surfaces. (2 capfuls of bleach in one quart of water.) (Be careful of noxious fumes and wear mask if necessary when cleaning.)
- Replace carpets with hard flooring; replace wallpaper with paint.
- Repair indoor water damage immediately.

Outdoors:
- Avoid cutting grass in late summer when mold spores are present in decaying vegetation.
- Avoid compost piles as these are large sources of mold spores.

House Dust Mite Allergen Reduction
- Wash bedding regularly (every 1-2 weeks) in hot water (approximately 110-120°F) to kill mites (washing with cold water removes 90% of mite allergens).
- Wash pillows and duvets in hot water and encase pillows and mattresses with protective coverings.
- Sufficient ventilation of home to decrease humidity; reduce indoor relative humidity to below 50% and avoid damp housing conditions.
- Use a good quality vacuum cleaner (one fitted with HEPA filter).
- Use a damp duster when dusting and cleaning surfaces
- Replace wall-to-wall carpets with linoleum, tile or wooden floors which can be wiped clean.
- Remove/reduce curtains and soft furnishings in the bedroom.
- Consider furniture with leather or vinyl coverings.
- Minimize soft toys in the bedroom; wash them in hot water or freeze them (in a kitchen deep-freezer) to kill house dust mites.

Cockroach Allergen Avoidance
- Remove sources of food and eradicate cockroaches with appropriate insecticides.
- Seal cracks in floors and ceilings and control for dampness
- Scrub floors with water and detergent to remove allergens.
- Bedding, curtains and clothing can be contaminated and must be washed.
**AIR CLEANERS:**

**HEPA** (High-efficiency particulate air filter) is **recommended**. It works as a fan drawing air through a paper or fine mesh filter. These filters are designed to remove 99.97% of all airborne pollutants 0.3 microns or larger from the air that passes through the filter (these include tobacco smoke, household dust and pollen).

**Electrostatic precipitator.** It works by drawing air through an electrical field. Charged particles are trapped on oppositely charged collector plates. The best precipitators use a fan. Precipitators generate small amounts of ozone, which has an odor that may be objectionable. They may also make a crackling sound as they accumulate dirt.

**Certification.** The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers certifies most air cleaners. The certification label tells you the cleaner’s maximum coverage areas as well as its clean-air delivery rate (CADR), a measure of the speed of cleaning. If looking for whole-house air cleaners instead of portable cleaners, look for the minimum efficiency reporting value (MERV).

**Cleaning Pets:**

Allerpet emollient, LyTar keratolytic shampoo ($11-12 per bottle).

**Vacuum Cleaners:**

- Hoover Self Propelled WindTunnel with Embedded DirtFINDER system. A HEPA filter system that comes with a powered hand tool, which is good for stairs and upholstery.
- Bosch’s Beetle Series. It combines a unique hygienic bag with a HEPA filter and operates silently at all power levels.