

## Choose From Two Plans for Getting the Dust Out

### THREE MONTH PLAN

Vacuum carpets thoroughly every week for three months to remove deep dust. Make 25 passes over the door mat and the carpet within four feet of the entrance doors, 16 passes over high traffic areas, and 8 passes over the rest of the carpet. After the three-month period, continue to vacuum on a regular basis.

### ONE WEEK PLAN

Use a vacuum with a dirt detector to show you where the dirt is and when the carpet is clean. The dirt detector can save time. A vacuum with a dirt detection system has a light that is red until deep dust is removed; once removed, the light changes to green (or another appropriate color). Check consumer product guides in the library before you buy. Vacuums with dirt detectors start around \$165, but top-rated vacuums cost between \$300 and \$370 in 2002. Clean one 4'x4' square before you move to the next area. Spread the work over several days.



Deep dust affects everyone in the home and usually contains dust mites, mold, other asthma triggers, lead, cadmium, pesticides, soot, bacteria, and cancer-causing agents (carcinogens).

Normal vacuuming of carpets removes surface dirt but does not get out deep-down dust that builds up in carpets. A crawling infant may breathe in or swallow this dust when it comes to the surface of the carpet.

Household dust is the main source of lead exposure for most infants and toddlers. Even small amounts of lead can reduce the intelligence, hearing, and growth of children. The highest lead risks are found in homes built before 1950. Extra care must be taken when remodeling an old home. See [www.watoxics.org/thbl.htm](http://www.watoxics.org/thbl.htm) to protect your children.

## Other Resources

Everyone, especially those with small children or chronic health conditions such as allergies, asthma, and immune deficiencies, may arrange for a free home environmental assessment by a Master Home Environmentalist (MHE) by calling one of the numbers listed below.

American Lung Association of Washington  
• Seattle, (206) 441-5100 ([www.alaw.org](http://www.alaw.org))

Clean Air for Kids  
• Tacoma, (253) 798-2954

American Lung Association of Washington  
• Yakima, (509) 248-4384

Master Home Environmentalists can survey risks from moisture, dust mites, mold, indoor air quality, lack of ventilation, and smoke, as well as lead and dust. They can also recommend a professional resource if they find high risks or remedies that may have higher costs.

For serious environmental health problems such as severe health complaints, more than one square foot of mold, or sewage backup, call your doctor, the Seattle-King County Hazard Line at (206) 296-4692 or 1-800-633-7585, or the Environmental Health Division at (206) 205-4394.

### ON-LINE RESOURCES

*Lead Control in Old Homes*  
• [www.watoxics.org/thbl.htm](http://www.watoxics.org/thbl.htm)

*Protecting Infants from Other Home Toxics*  
• [www.lwwa.org/advocacy/home-environment](http://www.lwwa.org/advocacy/home-environment)

## Get the Deep Dust Out of Carpets

**Protecting Small Children from Dust, Lead, Allergens, and Mold**



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**Supported by the  
Northwest Air Pollution Authority**

**Busy parents need the time-saving cleaning methods described here to control dust. There will be less dust fallout to remove from furniture after you get all the deep dust out of the carpet. Indoor air quality will also improve. Children will ingest and breathe less dirt, lead, allergens, and carcinogens. The carpet may look better and be softer to walk on. There is less chance of some people developing "sick building" symptoms such as fatigue, watery eyes and nose, coughing, rashes, irritability, and headaches.**

## Overview

Many infants crawling on carpets are exposed to high levels of pollutants. They eat the most dust at the same time their brains and other organs are developing. If you are concerned about the effects of the environment on your children, a good place to start is to get the deep dust out of carpets. Five to 20 times as much dust may remain in older carpets as is removed by normal vacuuming. Most parents can reduce the toxics on the carpet surface by 90 to 99% in one week with a commercial quality door mat and a vacuum with a dirt detector.

### Mold

A carpet laid on concrete in a basement, or one that has been soaked by a water spill, floods, roof, and plumbing leaks poses a high risk for developing mold, dust mites, and bacteria. These conditions can trigger allergies, asthma, and other diseases. Dry the wet carpet and the pad underneath with a fan and/or heater within 24 hours. Consider replacing moldy carpets and calling a professional or the health department for extensive water damage.

## Steps to Reduce Dust Exposure in Your Home

1. Wipe your feet twice on a quality doormat or remove shoes when entering the house. A large hardware store can special order a "twister" mat that can be purchased at a reasonable price.
2. Use a vacuum with a power brush on carpets. Vacuums without a power brush will clean bare floors but leave more dirt in area rugs and carpets.
3. Keep vacuums in good condition. Change the belt and brush as needed, and have the vacuum serviced by a technician if it is not working. Change the vacuum bag when it is half full. Read, follow, and keep the owner's manual.
4. Use a hand vacuum or an attachment with a power brush to clean upholstery. A powered hand brush is also good for cleaning stairs and the inside of cars.
5. Remove dust on a regular basis from furniture, window sills and troughs, doors, walls and steps. Use a lint-free dust cloth and wash or replace it often.
6. Select surfaces that are easy to clean when purchasing floor coverings. Many allergists recommend allergy control bedding covers\* and bare floors in bedrooms for people with asthma or for those who are allergic to dust mites. Bare floors are easiest to clean. Flat and level loop carpets are also easy to clean. Carpets with a short plush are next easiest, followed by multi-level, and deep plush, with shag carpets being the hardest to clean.

\* Allergy control pillow and mattress covers can be purchased at Group Health Take Care stores in the Puget Sound Region or by calling 1-800-422-DUST.