

Itching from Tiny Bugs

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This is a list of activities to relieve itching. This is a “how to” list mostly based in my experience; not a scientific research paper

The more items you use from this “how to” list to fix your home, the less you will itch.

A common cause of itching is tiny bugs. There are many types of tiny bugs. The names can be found on the internet under “mites” and “arthropods”. We lack identification tools in the office or laboratory. Allergy testing is not useful.

Many patients have a preoccupying overall itching, uncured by the types of care offered around here.

To stop itching from bugs get rid of the bugs inside and outside the house If these steps work you can do without a name.

Itching from bugs: Inside The House

Please remove your sofa to a garage. Before insecticide bombing the couch, remove the inner pillows from the cushion covers. Dry clean the covers. Find out how your pillow cushions can be cleaned without damaging them.



Next set off an insect aerosol bomb on the couch. The next day try sitting on the couch. See if you have less itching, while sitting on it. Repeat the aerosol insect bomb daily until no itching is felt, before bringing it back in the house.

When the cushion covers come back, dust diatomaceous earth inside the covers. Then replace the pillows inside the covers. Boric acid is said to work as well as diatomaceous earth.

Have the carpets steam cleaned. Good cleaners use dirt extraction suction to remove the dirty wash water.

Have your house interior sprayed by an insect exterminator. Ours comes four times a year. Boot- a- Pest.

Sprinkle and then sweep diatomaceous earth, (DE), into the carpet, especially at the edges of rooms. The insecticide exterminators’ spray blunts by moisture the effect of the ocean shells making DE, so put DE down long between the exterminator treatments.

Some bugs have a three-week life cycle. 1) eggs to 2) larvae to 3) adult biters. Repeat the treatment process day one and then three weeks later:

You can purchase bags of diatomaceous earth at Ace Hardware. This fine powder is in the pest control area, not the coarse form placed in the pool maintenance area. Dust over the carpet with a sprinkle of diatomaceous earth, broom spread it into the carpet. Let it sit in the carpet 24 hours. Vacuum it up the next day. Use a vacuum with a filter system separated from the vacuum motor, like the old Hoover. Vacuum motors in the Rocket can clog up.

Get rid of the vacuum bag. It will be coated with DE and the bugs.

A scent or smell may wake up the bugs Try not wearing perfume or scented lotions. We found this sitting in our favorite stuffed upholstery chair & couch.

Three unscented soothing lotions are Ceravue, Cetaphil and Derma cool (the latter is by prescription).

The indoor bugs like warm homes. Keeping homes at 75F or less seems to make bugs less active.

The dog: should be treated with flea insecticide (Vectra & others) on it's neck every month. Some people use a monthly oral pill.

You must keep a very clean house.

You must not let animal waste sit on the floor or ground. I humbly suggest no matter how much you love your pet; if you are unable to keep your floor entirely clean you have moved into a stage in life in which a domestic pet may be too much. You may incur a cost of cleaning or the effort of cleaning so arduous the pet has to be given up.

If your dog is scratching, this is a matter for a veterinarian. But I think this is a sign your own itching is related.

You have to dust or wash all objects in rooms where you feel itching.

Washing includes shelves, countertops, picture frames and the frame backs, furniture, nick- knacks and books' outer surfaces. The tiny bugs find shelter in dust. Or remove all the objects,

Pillows; Buy new ones. If the inside material permits wash your old pillows in the hottest temperature setting of the washer. Dry in hottest temperature setting of the dryer. Repeat few times a year. Buy pillow protectors at Amazon .com, or dry goods stores like Bed Bath & Beyond. The pillow protectors say "mite protection".

Wash and dry mattress pads. Amazon carries "Demite Laundry Additive" to help kill mites during the washing. Wash sheets and outside -yard- exposed clothing with Demite additive separately from other items.

A commercial product Mite Fighter by Greenbreathe on Amazon.com .It contains lemon, eucalyptus oil, and citronella oil in packets. Place packets between cushions & in pillow cases.

Mattresses; replace very old ones or if you notice itching while in bed. Mattresses should be encased in tightly woven nylon cases. There are mattress protectors, which zip up around the mattress pad and the mattress, capturing tiny bugs inside. Don't open the mattress case indoors after putting it on.

If you notice itching while sleeping on a mattress but it is too costly to replace; wipe the cover off with a damp cloth or vacuum it. You are removing your human skin flakes. Dead skin flakes get through the fabric then feed the bugs inside.

If itching restarts, take the mattress outside. Remove the cover outside. Wash the protector or replace it. Vacuum the mattress fabric. You still will have to replace it, if it harbors so many bugs it still causes itching.

Also, on Amazon find Active Guard Liner. It is a sheet of fine woven gauze with impregnated mite treatment. Place between mattress and box spring.

Other surfaces/sources

Indoor floor coverings such as throw rugs and carpeting have to be considered. Most straightforward and effective is to remove the soft porous surface coverings. Replace by nonporous floor coverings like linoleum, wood, Pergo, concrete or ceramic tile.

Consider air purifiers which have three types of air filters including HEPA filters. Two brands are Winix and Honeywell

I see them rated as purifying the air of about 350 square feet of living space. I have one taking care of the air in my examination area.

The finest of the three layers of filters captures COVID-19 viruses. Some air purifiers also have infrared rays to kill viral particles. Reviews on this aspect are mixed.

HVAC: For home air conditioners, replace the intake openings', (returns), filters with new air filters monthly. Use the best grade of filter your AC unit can handle. Merve 8 or Merve 9 grade filters work well to avoid letting dust and mites flow into your house. Aside from the looser knit filters on the grocery store shelves, Holt Filters in Clearwater carries a full line of high filter capacity ("Merve" graded) filters.

Also, on Amazon.com Ultrasonic Flea Mite Killer \$24.99. This small electric device might work.

Tiny Bugs Outside

After going outside into the backyard where "no-see-ums" and other insects bite or light, upon returning inside, undress and put clothes in the laundry room before coming further inside.

Then bathe after exposure to the outdoors or a greenhouse area.

The tiny bugs (arthropods) feed on natural living or formerly live parts of life such as skin cells and moist leaves. They thrive in water/humidity.

Having trees which drop leaves is a problem. Leaves on the ground catch rainwater. The bugs stay on the wet leaves So rake up or vacuum all the leaves. For owners of oak trees, which drop leaves, this is a bigger problem than for owners of evergreen trees.

My idea for prevention is bare some of your shady ground which does not dry in the sun nor support grass. Cover it with woven cloth, weed blocker and then cover that with rock. Southern Landscaping Materials on US 19 in Tarpon Springs and Carroll's Building Materials on 13th Ave in St Petersburg both carry a wide variety of rocks.

Rock does not hold water. The water rolls off the rocks to the weed block cloth. The water drips through it to the ground below. The outside pest exterminator sprays all of the garden, lawn and shrubs every other month. We use Southern Lawn and Pest in Tarpon Springs.

I am trying pine cones and sphagnum moss as alternatives to rock, for a softer visual effect in places. I am hoping these will not harbor as many arthropods.

Plants Bromeliads: -- I'm told these plants secrete insect poisons in the open leaf cone. So, this is a garden plant which can be encouraged. I have not read, but suspect shrubs which dry during the day harbor fewer arthropods.

It is more important the ground below is not a haven for arthropods. Inert mulch might be nearly as good as rock. But in my perceptions of itchy areas, rock is the better ground cover.

Azalea horticulture praises oak leaves as high acid value ground cover. But I am not leaving the leaves for Azaleas. I am trying coffee grounds to add acid for flower nurture.

The pleasing live ground covers which use up moisture would include grass, *widelia trilobatum* (yellow flowers), Peacock ginger (purple flowers), and southern jasmine (white flowers).

The orchid breeder who waters weekly with one ice cube per plant is not bothered by itching. The orchid breeder who waters daily is bothered.

Location of a home near a water feature is another consideration. Location near Tampa Bay, near a canal, a pond, an estuary, i.e. quiet nonturbulent water seems to be another factor in disseminating bugs as well as fungi, and aeroallergens.

Itching affects regular people, some who have not had other medical problems.

Locally I have not seen this problem dealt with by other medical professionals.

So, this domestic advice comes from--Owen Linder MD, FACP and Marcia Linder, MSW
11/9/2020. Dust Mite photo from Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_dust_mite

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