

Preventing Asthma Triggers

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the tubes that carry air through the lungs. Asthma can cause wheezing, breathlessness, tightness in the chest and night or early morning coughing. Asthma is an illness that cannot be cured but can be controlled.

Symptoms of Asthma

Asthma symptoms are not the same for everyone, but here are some of the common symptoms:

- Shortness of breath - feels like you cannot get enough air into your lungs.
- Tightness or pain in the chest - feels like rubber bands are strapped around your chest.
- Wheezing - a low or loud whistle sound when you breathe in or out.
- Coughing - a mild cough or hacking often occurring at night, in the morning or lasting more than a week.

What are Asthma Triggers?

Asthma triggers are things that start an attack or make your asthma worse. It is important to find out what your triggers are and to learn ways to avoid them. Staying away from your asthma triggers can help prevent an asthma attack.

Some Common Asthma Triggers

Pets/Furry Animals

Some people are allergic to flakes of skin (dander), dried saliva, oil, urine and feces from dogs, cats, rodents or other pets with fur or feathers.

- Keep cats, dogs and feathered pets out of your home and out of your bedroom if they trigger asthma flare-ups.
- Bathe pets on a regular basis or consider finding your pet a new home.



Dust Mites

Many people with asthma are allergic to dust mites. Dust mites are like tiny “bugs” you can’t see that live in your bedding, mattress, pillows, sheets and covers, stuffed toys and carpet.

- Cover the mattress and pillow in a dust-proof cover.
- Wash your sheets and blankets every week in hot water above 120 degrees.
- Remove stuffed toys from the bedroom or wash toys weekly in hot water.
- Stay out of rooms while they are being vacuumed and for a short while after.
- Remove carpet from the bedroom, if possible.

Smoking

Smoke from cigarettes can irritate the lungs of people with asthma. Children who live with people who smoke and are exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have more symptoms.

- Do not allow smoking in the home or in cars.
- Keep children away from secondhand smoke.



Cockroaches

Many people with asthma are allergic to the dried droppings and remains of cockroaches. Cockroaches are attracted to water and food left out in open containers.

- Keep food and garbage in closed containers and never leave food out.
- Get rid of cockroaches in your home.
- Keep all food out of the bedrooms.



Weather/Pollen

Weather changes such as high humidity or freezing temperatures may trigger asthma attacks. Pollen from plants like grasses, weeds, trees and flowers can cause allergic reactions and also trigger asthma attacks.



- Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf on cold or windy days.
- Stay indoors with the windows closed, and use an air conditioner in your home and car.
- Avoid going outside on days and at times when pollen counts are high.

Mold

Mold is a type of fungus, with a spore that can be inhaled, causing asthma attacks. Molds can be found in damp areas such as garbage containers.

- Remove piled grass soon after your lawn is mowed.
- Keep trash containers clean and dry.
- Clean moldy areas or shower curtains with a cleaner that kills mold.

Smoke, Strong Odors, Sprays and Air Pollution

Smoke, strong odors and sprays can bother fragile airways when inhaled. Industrial emissions such as smog from cars can also cause asthma attacks.

- If possible, do not use a wood-burning stove, fireplace or kerosene heater.
- Try to stay away from strong odors and sprays, such as perfume, talcum powder, hair spray and paint.
- Plan outdoor activities at times when air pollution levels are low.