

Asthma & Environmental Triggers

Triggers are substances in the environment that cause asthma symptoms. When a person with asthma come into contact with these substances, asthma symptoms may appear or become worse. If you know your asthma triggers then you can avoid those things that trigger your asthma symptoms.



Respiratory Infections

Colds, the flu or bronchitis can also be an asthma triggers. Be sure to:

- ◆ Get a yearly flu shot
- ◆ Stay away from people with colds
- ◆ Wash hands regularly especially during the cold and flu season
- ◆ Talk to your doctor about treating your asthma during the first signs of a respiratory infection

Weather Changes

Cold, dry air, very hot weather, change in seasons, or a sudden change in weather conditions can trigger asthma symptoms. To help prevent this:

- ◆ Cover the nose and mouth with a scarf on cold or windy days
- ◆ Use an air conditioner or go to places that are air-conditioned
- ◆ Know the weather forecast
- ◆ Reduce physical activities during very hot or cold weather



Exercise

Asthma symptoms can sometimes be triggered by exercise. To avoid this:

- ◆ Talk with your doctor about taking medicine prior to planned exercise
- ◆ Warm up for 10-15 minutes before exercising
- ◆ Limit outdoor exercise when the air pollution/pollen levels are

Stress/Excitement

Emotions such as fear, anger, frustration, crying, and laughing too hard can be an asthma trigger. To deal with this:

- ◆ Learn how to calm down fast
- ◆ Try slow breathing



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There are two kinds of triggers, (1) is an allergen and the other (2) is an irritant.

1. Allergens are substances that produce an allergic reaction. People with allergies have reactions to certain substance. Not everyone has allergies or allergic reactions to substance.
2. Irritants are substances that cause some inflammation or discomfort to the body.

Allergens

Outdoor Allergens

Some people are allergic to certain things such as pollen, trees, fresh cut grass and foods.

To prevent asthma symptoms:

- ◆ Close windows and use an air conditioner if possible to keep allergens from getting inside the house
- ◆ Stay indoor on high allergen days or when the air quality is poor
- ◆ Avoid food that you know you are allergic to
- ◆ Remove shoes outdoors before entering the home to avoid tracking outdoor allergens into the home



Dust Mites

Dust mites can be found in every home, those with asthma can be allergic to them. This allergic reaction can cause asthma symptoms to become worse. Dust mites live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric-covered furniture, bed covers, stuffed toys and clothes. To decrease exposure to dust mites you can do the following:

- ◆ Wash sheets and blankets once a week in hot water
- ◆ Choose washable stuffed toys, wash them often in hot water and dry very well
- ◆ Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof zippered covers
- ◆ Vacuum weekly or more often



Pets

Skin flakes, urine and saliva from pets can be asthma triggers for some people. You can do the following to decrease exposure to pet allergens:

- ◆ Consider keeping pets outdoors or even finding a new home for your pets, if necessary
- ◆ Keep pets out of the bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times and keep the door closed
- ◆ Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys



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Pests

Body parts and droppings from pests like cockroaches and rodents can be asthma triggers.

You can decrease exposure to these by doing the following:

- ◆ Do not leave food or garbage out
- ◆ Store food in airtight containers
- ◆ Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away
- ◆ Try using boric acid powder (for ants/cockroaches) or traps. Caulk and seal all holes and cracks



Mold

Damp and/or water damaged areas can grow mold. To decrease the chance for mold to grow, moisture and extra water must be decreased. You can decrease mold growth by doing the following:

- ◆ Fix all leaky plumbing and other places where water can get into the home
- ◆ Wash mold from surfaces and dry very well. Carpeting and other things that cannot be dried well may need to be replaced
- ◆ Keep drip pans in air conditioning units, refrigerator and dehumidifier dry and clean
- ◆ Vent the clothes dryer to the outside



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Irritants

Tobacco Smoke

Tobacco smoke is harmful to everyone and should be avoided. Those with asthma are especially at risk of increased harmful effects of tobacco smoke. To decrease exposure to smoke, you can do the following:

- ◆ If you smoke, quit
- ◆ Do not smoke in your home or car and do not allow others to do so
- ◆ Do not smoke around children



Chemicals

Exposure to chemicals, inhaled into the lungs or contact with unprotected skin can cause severe irritation to anyone. But, also chemicals that produce strong odors or smells can trigger asthma symptoms. To avoid this:

- ◆ Try to limit use or contact with those who use perfumes, talcum powder, hair spray and paints
- ◆ Avoid using cleaning products that have strong scents. If possible use “Green” cleaning products that do not contain chemicals



Many different things in the environment can trigger asthma symptoms. Not all asthma triggers are the same for every person with asthma. People with asthma need to find out what things affect them and take steps to stay away from these triggers.

If you would like more information please contact:

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