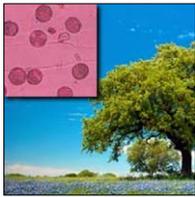


## What Are Asthma Triggers?

**Asthma triggers** are things outside the body that cause an asthma episode (attack). In other words, triggers can cause your airways to become swollen, tight, and stuffed up due to extra mucus. What causes an asthma episode in one person may not bother another person with asthma. Therefore, the first step to preventing asthma episodes is knowing your asthma triggers and finding ways to avoid them.

**Common Triggers and Ways to Avoid Them** - Remember, when reducing triggers in the home, start with the easiest thing for you to do and go from there. You may want to start in your child's bedroom and work your way to the rest of your home over time. Some common triggers and ways to avoid them are listed below:



### Pollen and Outdoor Molds

- Stay indoors in the afternoon when pollen count is high.
- Use air conditioning in the home when possible. Keep the filter clean.
- Keep windows closed during seasons when pollen and mold are highest.
- Avoid sources of molds such as wet leaves and garden debris.
- Avoid damp and dark places, like basements.



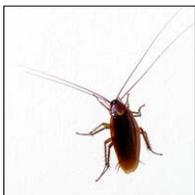
### House Dust Mites

- Cover your mattress and box spring in an airtight cover.
- Cover your pillow in an airtight cover or wash the pillowcase once a week.
- Avoid sleeping or lying on fabric (uncovered) furniture.
- Remove carpets that are laid on concrete and replace them with flooring.
- Wash your bed covers, clothes, and stuffed toys once a week in very hot (130°F) water.
- Reduce indoor humidity to less than 50% by using a dehumidifier.
- Remove carpets from your bedroom, and replace them with flooring.
- Use a vacuum cleaner to reduce the amount of dust that you breathe. Try to use a strong suction vacuum cleaner with an allergen bag or HEPA filter. Avoid staying in a room while it is being vacuumed.
- Dust surfaces regularly and buy and wear an “N95” dust mask when dusting.



### Animal Dander and Feathers (cats, birds, dogs, and rodents)

- Remove animals from the house or school classroom.
- If you must have a pet, keep it out of your bedroom at all times.
- Upgrade your furnace filter to a high efficiency air filter (MERV >8)
- Wash the pet weekly—even cats, if possible.
- Try to avoid visits to friends and relatives who have pets or limit the amount of time spent in their home.
- Ask your primary care provider (PCP) which medicine to take before visiting homes or places where animals may be present.
- Avoid using products such as pillows or comforters that contain feathers.
- Avoid using pillows, bedding, and furniture stuffed with kapok (silky fibers from the seed pods of the silk-cotton tree).
- Use HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filters in vacuum cleaners, heaters, and air conditioners.



### Cockroaches

- Keep kitchen area clean and free of uncovered food containers.
- Use roach gel traps to control roaches.
- Avoid insect chemical sprays if possible. If you must use them, have someone else spray when you are out of the house and air out the home for a few hours before returning.



### Indoor Molds

- Keep bathrooms, kitchens, and basements as dry as possible.
- Run any exhaust vents to remove excess moisture from the air.
- Clean bathrooms, kitchens, and basements regularly.
- Avoid using room humidifiers unless absolutely necessary.
- Use dehumidifiers for damp basement areas. Set the humidity level between 30% and 50%. Empty and clean the unit regularly.



### Tobacco Smoke (including cigarette and cigar smoke)

- Do not smoke. If you do smoke, try to quit. Remember, it's best for your health and your children.
- Do not allow smoking in your home. If they must smoke, ask friends and family to smoke outside.
- Do not allow any smoking in the child's bedroom.
- Avoid secondhand smoke, even in public places.
- Use a portable room air cleaner to remove smoke, dust, and animal dander.

### Wood Smoke

- Do not use a wood-burning or gas stove to heat your home.
- Avoid using kerosene heaters indoors.
- Limit use of fireplaces.

### Chemicals and Strong Odors



- If your home is being painted, do not stay in the house. Allow enough time for the paint to dry before going back in.
- Avoid using perfume or cologne.
- Avoid using strong-smelling cosmetics such as talcum powder, hair spray, or nail polish.
- Avoid using room deodorizers.
- Avoid using perfumed fabric softener or dryer sheets.
- Use non-perfumed household products whenever possible.
- Reduce strong cooking odors, especially frying, by using an exhaust hood, electric fan, or by opening windows.
- Avoid air pollution by staying indoors on days when the pollution is high.

### Colds and Infections



- Avoid people with colds or the flu, if possible.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Get rest, eat a balanced diet, and exercise regularly.
- Talk to your PCP about flu shots.
- Avoid taking over-the-counter cold remedies, such as antihistamines and cough syrup, unless you speak to your PCP first.
- Wear a scarf over your mouth and nose in cold weather.

### Exercise

- Work out an asthma control plan with your PCP that allows you to exercise without symptoms.
- Ask your PCP which medicine to take before exercising.
- Warm up before doing exercise and cool down after.