

# Asthma Triggers

Triggers are things that make your asthma worse. Some triggers are things you are allergic to and some just irritate your airways. You can reduce how often your asthma flares up by reducing exposure to your triggers.

## Triggers

## What you can do to reduce your triggers

### Cigarette Smoke

*Tobacco smoke can make asthma worse.*



- Do not allow smoking in your home, car, or around you.
- If you smoke, ask your health care provider for ways to help you quit. Ask family members to quit, too.
- Ask your health care provider for a referral to a quit smoking program, or call the US Network of Quitlines: **800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)**.

### Colds, Flu, Bronchitis

*When you're sick, your asthma is more likely to flare up.*



- Wash your hands often.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Get a flu shot every year, preferably in the fall.
- Avoid contact with people who have colds.

### Dust Mites

*These tiny bugs live in cloth, carpet, and bedding and are too small to see with the naked eye.*



- Get special dust mite-proof covers for your pillows and mattresses.
- Wash sheets and blankets in hot water every week.
- Wash stuffed animals frequently and dry completely.
- Avoid having carpeting, if you can.
- Vacuum carpet weekly with a HEPA vacuum cleaner.

### Pollen & Outdoor Air Pollution

*Some people are allergic to molds or pollen from trees, grass, and weeds.*



- Try to keep your windows closed during pollen season and when mold counts are high.
- Plan to do indoor activities on high pollen days.
- Ask your health care provider about taking medicine during allergy season.
- Get daily air quality forecasts at **www.airnow.gov**

### Animals

*Some people are allergic to skin flakes (dander), urine, or saliva from animals and birds.*



- Keep pets with fur or feathers out of your home.
- If you can't keep a pet outdoors, then keep the pet out of your bedroom, and keep the bedroom door closed.
- Keep pets off upholstered furniture and away from stuffed toys.
- Wash your hands after petting or playing with pets.

### Mice, Rats, and Cockroaches

*Some people are allergic to the droppings from these pests.*



- Do not leave food or garbage uncovered.
- Clean up spills and food crumbs right away.
- Store food in airtight containers.
- Store cooking grease in the refrigerator.
- Keep food out of the bedroom.

### Indoor Mold

*This can be a trigger if your home has high moisture.*



- Fix leaking faucets, pipes, or other sources of water.
- Clean moldy surfaces with hot water and soap.
- Use a dehumidifier in the basement if it is damp and smelly.

### Wood Smoke, Strong Odors, and Sprays

*These can reduce air quality and irritate airways.*



- Avoid strong odors and sprays, like perfume, powders, hair spray, paints, incense, cleaning products, candles, and new carpeting.
- Avoid inhaling smoke from burning wood.

### Exercise or Sports

*These can trigger an asthma attack for some people.*



- Take your rescue medicine before sports or exercise to prevent symptoms if directed by your health care provider.
- Warm up / cool down for 5-10 minutes before and after sports or exercise.

### Other Triggers

*Cold air, changes in weather, and strong emotions can set off an asthma attack!*



- Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf when it gets cold.
- Sometimes laughing or crying can be a trigger.
- Some medicines and foods can trigger asthma.