



Your partners  
in asthma management

# ASTHMA TRIGGERS

## What Can I Do?

### Dust & dust mites

Dust mites are microscopic animals too small to be seen by the naked eye found in every home. Dust mites are found in bedding, carpets, old clothing, fabric furniture and stuffed toys and are most common in humid environments. Body parts, saliva and feces of dust mites can trigger asthma for those with an allergy to dust mites.

- Wash sheets and blankets weekly in hot water (130° F or higher) to kill dust mites.
- Avoid upholstered furniture, window mini-blinds, and carpeting in the bedroom and playroom as much as possible.
- Dust and vacuum weekly. Use a vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate) filter to collect and trap dust mites
- Remove stuffed animals from your child's bed. Only a few washable stuffed animals should be allowed in your child's room, and these should be washed weekly. (Let your child pick which washable stuffed animals can stay.)
- Avoid humidifiers. Dust mites can't survive in climates where the humidity is less than 50 percent.

### Pollen

Pollen can be found in trees, grass and weeds and is a common allergen. Pollen easily travels with wind and is higher during certain seasons, however, these particles can linger in your home year-round.

- Air conditioners help remove excess air moisture, filter out pollens from the outside, and provide air circulation. Filters should be changed once a month.
- Keep windows and doors closed during high pollen count days.
- Have your child bathe and change clothing (not in their bedroom) after playing outside on high pollen count days.



### Mold

Mold grows indoors and outdoors most commonly in warm, dark and moist areas. Mold produces tiny, seed-like spores to reproduce. These spores easily become airborne. When moisture accumulates indoors, mold often occurs. Asthma symptoms can be triggered for those with an allergic reaction to mold.

- Ventilate bathrooms, basements, and other dark, moist places that commonly grow mold.
- Wipe down damp surfaces, especially in the bathroom after showers.
- Consider using a dehumidifier in basements to remove air moisture.
- Avoid humidifiers. High levels of humidity promote mold growth.
- Humidity should ideally be kept between 30-40 percent.

## Cockroaches/Pests

Cockroach feces and saliva are both allergens and can trigger asthma symptoms. Most prevalent in inner-city areas, but can be found in any household.

- Keep food out of the bedroom and in sealed containers.
- Keep garbage containers covered.
- Clean and vacuum frequently.
- Make sure to clean under cabinets and large kitchen appliances.
- If pests are an issue, contact pest control for further guidance.



## Pet dander

Asthma can be triggered by pet hair, dander (skin flakes), urine and saliva. Even if you don't have pets in your home, exposure can occur from others who have recently been around pets.

- The best thing to do is to keep pets with fur or hair out of your home.
- If this is not an option, keep pets out of the bedroom and off of furniture.
- Wash your child's hands and face when in contact with animals.
- Bathe pets and vacuum carpets weekly.

## Tobacco smoke

- Do not smoke (or allow others to smoke) in the house — even when the child is not present, the smoke gets trapped in the upholstery and carpets.
- Eliminating smoke is the single most important thing a family member can do to help a child with asthma.
- If you need help to quit smoking, please ask your asthma educator for more information on smoking cessation support.



## Fumes/Sprays/Chemicals

Perfumes, fragrances, cleaning products and other household agents are composed of hundreds of different allergenic ingredients.

- Avoid strong odors from paint, perfume, hair spray, disinfectants, chemical cleaners, air fresheners and glues.
- If exposure is unavoidable, please allow for adequate ventilation and breaks from fumes.