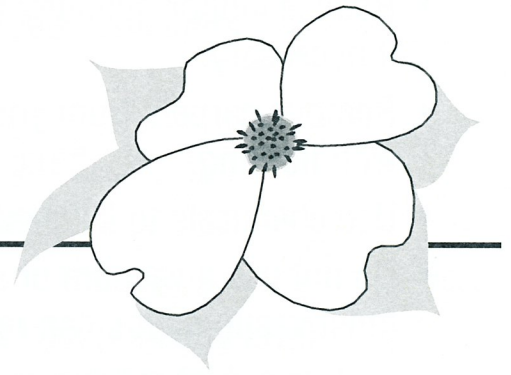


# What Are Asthma Triggers?

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## 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, tightened, 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

Sometimes just one thing can trigger an episode, but other times it may be two or more things. 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.
- Do not sleep or lie on fabric (uncovered) furniture.
- Remove carpets that are laid on concrete and replace the carpets 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 if necessary.
- Remove carpets from your bedroom, and replace the carpets with flooring.
- Use chemicals to kill dust mites in the house.
- Do not use a vacuum or stay in a room while it is being vacuumed. If you must vacuum, you can reduce the amount of dust that you breathe in if you:
  - Use a dust mask.
  - Use a central vacuum cleaner with the collecting bag outside of the home.
  - Use a vacuum cleaner that has powerful suction.

### **Animal skin, hair, and feathers (cats, birds, dogs, and rodents)**

- Remove the animal from the house or school classroom.
- If you must have a pet, keep it out of your bedroom at all times.
- If there is forced-air heating in the home with a pet, close the air ducts in your bedroom.
- Wash the pet weekly—even cats.
- Try to avoid visits to friends and relatives who have pets or limit the amount of time spent in their home.
- Ask your doctor which medicine to take before visiting homes or places where animals are present.
- Do not use products such as pillows or comforters that are made of feathers.
- Do not use 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**

- Use insect sprays, but have someone else spray when you are out of the house, and air out the home for a few hours before returning.
- Use roach traps to control roaches.

- Keep kitchen area clean and free of uncovered food containers.

### **Indoor molds**

- Keep bathrooms, kitchens, and basements well aired.
- Clean bathrooms, kitchens, and basements regularly.
- Do not use humidifiers.
- Use dehumidifiers for damp basement areas. Set the humidity level between 25 and 50%. Empty and clean the unit regularly.

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

- Do not smoke.
- Do not allow smoking in your home. Ask friends and family to smoke outside.
- Do not allow any smoking in your bedroom.
- Use an indoor air-cleaning device (for smoke, mold, and animal dander).
- Avoid secondhand smoke.

### **Wood smoke**

- Do not use a wood-burning stove to heat your home.
- Do not use kerosene heaters.
- Limit use of fireplaces.



### **Strong odors and sprays**

- If your home is being painted, do not stay in the house. Allow enough time for the paint to dry before going back in.
- Do not use perfume or cologne.
- Do not use strong-smelling cosmetics such as talcum powder, hair spray, or nail polish.
- Do not use room deodorizers.
- Do not use perfumed fabric softener or dryer sheets.
- Use nonperfumed household products whenever possible.
- Reduce strong cooking odors, especially frying, by using a fan and opening windows.

- Avoid air pollution by staying indoors on days when the pollution is high.

## Colds and infections

- Do not go near people with colds or the flu.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Get rest, eat a balanced diet, and exercise regularly.
- Talk to your doctor about flu shots.
- Do not take over-the-counter cold remedies, such as antihistamines and cough syrup, unless you speak to your doctor first.

## Exercise

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

## Weather

- Wear a scarf over your mouth and nose in cold weather.



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