
Section 6

Triggers
and
Trigger
Avoidance

Triggers

Most asthma symptoms start when your airways are bothered by something. These things that bother your asthma are called triggers. Some triggers are allergic, and others are non-allergic. You'll feel better when you stay away from or control your triggers. Are your symptoms better at some times of the year and worse at other times? Do they happen after you have come in contact with a particular trigger? Tell your doctor what you learn about your triggers.

Mark the triggers that start your asthma symptoms?

Allergic Triggers

- House dust mites (Found in bedding, carpeting, upholstered furniture)
- Dogs, cats, rabbits, other animals or birds
- Pollen from trees (March-April), grasses (May-July), and weeds (August-September)
- Mold or yeast spores (Found in damp basements, bathrooms, kitchens, and outside wooded areas)
- Cockroach particles
- Aspirin, penicillin, or other medicine
- Food additives (such as preservatives)
- Foods: (List) _____
- Other _____

Non-allergic Triggers

- Colds or flu, bacteria or viruses
- Strong odors or vapors from perfumes, paints, sprays, natural gas, propane, kerosene, or other substances
- Tobacco smoke
- Weather changes or very cold air
- Burning wood, coal, or paper
- Heating sources: oil, gas, electric
- Heat distribution: radiant, hot water, steam, hot air
- Air pollution
- Crying, laughing, or yelling
- Exercise or physical activity
- Other _____

Trigger Avoidance

There are many things you can do to avoid triggers and prevent an asthma episode or attack.

To prevent an asthma episode or attack due to dust, take the following actions:

- Wear a dust mask while vacuuming. Have someone else dust and do the vacuuming.
- Vacuum or wipe down the mattress and pillow covers weekly.
- Use polyester-filled pillows, not feather pillows. Avoid feather quilts.
- Replace mini-blinds with washable curtains or vinyl shades. (Wash or wipe weekly).
- Store items in easy-to-dust, covered plastic containers.
- Dust and mop weekly.
- Change furnace or air conditioner filter at least once a month.
- Consider installing an electrostatic filter or an electrostatic cleaner. This is placed in your forced-air system to filter out antigens. Run a HEPA air-cleaning unit in your bedroom.

To prevent asthma episode or attacks due to animals or pollen:

- Find a new home for your pets or keep them outdoors. Never let them into your bedroom.
- Keep windows and doors closed during pollen season. Use an air conditioner if possible.
- Do not hang laundry outside during pollen season. Pollen settles on the laundry as it hangs outside.

To prevent asthma episode or attacks caused by mold or mildew:

- Use a room dehumidifier if mold is a problem. Avoid vaporizers and humidifiers.
- Keep air conditioners clean to discourage mold growth.
- Use bleach solutions to kill mold and mildew in bathrooms and kitchens.
- Keep closets and bathrooms dry and aired out.

To prevent asthma episode or attacks caused by cockroach particles, medicines or food additives:

- Control cockroaches and other pests. Use gel baits to control cockroaches. Never use sprays or powders.
- Avoid medicines and food additives that cause trouble.

To avoid asthma episode or attacks caused by non-allergic triggers:

- Get a flu shot every fall to reduce your chances of catching the flu.
- Be sure to wash your hands, eat healthy foods, and stay away from people who are sick to reduce your chances of catching a cold.
- Don't allow cigarette smoking in your home.
- Wear a scarf over your nose/mouth during cold months.
- Stay inside on high air pollution days.

Dust Mites

Your doctor may tell you that you are allergic to dust mites. If you are allergic to dust mites, you may take the following measures to decrease dust mites in your home:

- Cover your mattress in an airtight cover.
- Cover your pillow in an airtight cover or wash it weekly.
- Wash your bedding in water of 130 degrees weekly.
- Avoid sleeping or lying on upholstered furniture.
- Remove stuffed animals from your bed and sleeping area.
- Do not use a bedroom humidifier.
- Avoid motor-driven equipment in carpeted bedrooms (vacuum cleaners, hair dryers).
- Wet-mop wooden baseboards frequently.
- If you sleep on a waterbed, wipe the waterbed surface and airtight covers with 130-degree water weekly.

If necessary, your doctor may also ask you to take additional measures to decrease dust mites in your home:

- Remove carpets that are laid on concrete.
- Reduce your indoor humidity to 25-35%.
- Use chemical agents to kill mites or alter the mite antigens in your home.
- Remove carpets from your bedroom.

Remember, **prevention is a very important part** of your treatment plan. Be sure to take action to prevent asthma episode or attacks!