

Asthma Triggers

Each child's asthma triggers are different. Pay attention to what makes your child's asthma worse. Check off on this form as you identify the triggers that make your child's symptoms worse.

dust from pillows, beds, chairs, couches, stuffed animals and rugs



strong smells and sprays



animals with fur and birds



colds and flu



mold and mildew



weather changes



roaches



cold, dry air



pollen, trees and fresh cut grass



strong emotions, anxiety, stress



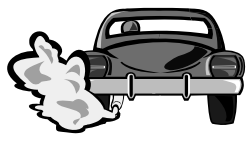
smoke



exercise and physical activity



air pollution



foods



Anything else? _____



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Reducing Asthma Triggers

Dust Mites

Dust in the home makes asthma worse for most children. In the dust, there are tiny bugs called **dust mites** that are so small you can not see them. It is the dust mites that really bother people with asthma. They thrive in warm, humid areas filled with dust. They live in carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture and drapes.

What can you do about dust mites?

- Wash bedding weekly in hot water.
- Use plastic or dust proof casings (hypo-allergenic) on mattresses and pillows.
- Vacuum carpets and upholstered furniture weekly. Use high-efficiency filters, such as HEPA, or 1-micron filter bags on your vacuum cleaner. Vacuum cleaners with poor filtration release and stir up dust and allergens.
- Remove rugs and carpets.
- Minimize the number of stuffed toys on the child's bed and wash them weekly.
- Place old books in drawers or containers.
- Replace drapes with washable curtains or try using blinds.
- Use air-conditioning in the bedroom where the child sleeps to reduce humidity and pollen. Make sure air conditioning ducts are cleaned yearly.

It is usually best to start identifying and reducing asthma triggers in the bedroom, because of the amount of time spent sleeping close to many sources of dust mites.

Important Note: An asthmatic child should never be in a room while it is being cleaned.

Cockroaches

Cockroaches live on food and garbage and move very quickly through very small spaces. The allergen which triggers asthma is in the feces—and this remains even when the roaches are killed.

What can you do to reduce or eliminate cockroaches?

- Clean up after eating, don't leave food or garbage out.
- Clean up any crumbs, spills, or puddles of water or other liquids.
- Cover and put away food in cabinets or in the refrigerator
- Seal cracks in cabinets and pantry area.
- Try poison baits or traps before using pesticide sprays.

If you live in an apartment or condo, talk with the landlord, tenants association or neighbors about working together to get rid of roaches.

Pesticides

Children are the most vulnerable to adverse health effects from pesticides, because they are more likely to play on floors and lawns. Avoid using pesticide sprays as they are triggers for asthma and have other health risks.

Here are some suggestions for avoiding negative affects of pesticides:

- Avoid using pesticide sprays.
- Read and understand the labels on the pesticide spray bottle.
- Don't use sprays when children are present in the room.
- Take caution in storing pesticides.
- Make sure there is sufficient ventilation in the home when you spray the pesticides.

Mold and Fungi

Mold grows outdoors and indoors, especially in damp areas.

- Clean moldy surfaces (such as the shower walls and shower curtains) at least once a month with warm, soapy water.
- Clean and dry damp or wet building materials and furnishing within 24-38 hours to prevent mold growth.
- Fix leaky plumbing and other sources of water damage.
- Keep air conditioning pans clean and dry.
- Use exhaust fans or open windows while showering, cooking, or using the dishwasher.
- Maintain low indoor humidity.

Pets

If your child is allergic to pets, you should:

- Keep pets out of sleeping area or restrict them to one area of the home, such as outdoors or in the basement.
- Keep pets away from upholstered furniture, carpets, heavy drapes, and stuffed toys.
- Consider keeping pets outdoors or even finding them a new home, if necessary.
- Be aware that cats top the charts in producing allergy symptoms.

Outdoor Allergens and Pollutants

Here are some suggestions for reducing the affects of outdoor allergens and pollutants:

- Know which outdoor allergens (such as pollen, ragweed, grasses) and pollutants (such as ozone) trigger your child's asthma.
- Check the weather report for information on outdoor allergen or irritant levels.
- When conditions are bad outside, try keeping the child inside, close windows, and use an air conditioner.
- Have the child wash hands and hair and change clothes before bedtime to remove pollen if child was playing outside.
- Your physician may recommend increasing asthma medications on bad days.

Weather

To minimize the effects of weather changes on asthma flare-ups, you should:

- Encourage wearing a mask or scarf over mouth and nose when outside during very cold weather.
- Keep windows closed at night to keep out pollen and molds. When hot, use A/C, which cleans, cools, and dries the air.
- Don't ask child to mow the lawn and rake the leaves. Keep child away from freshly cut grass and leaf piles.
- Dry clothes in dryer; hanging them outside allows for mold and pollen to collect on clothes and sheets.
- Ask doctor about seasonal increases in medications.
- If allergies trigger your child's asthma, it is a good idea to have an appointment with an allergist.

Respiratory Infections

Respiratory infections such as the common cold and flu can exacerbate asthma in some children.

- Encourage your child to avoid contact with people that have a respiratory infection.
- Be sure everyone in the family uses best practice in hand washing.
- See a health care provider as soon as your child is ill for early diagnosis and treatment.

Emotions

Children may experience asthma symptoms when they are anxious or stressed, or after laughing hard, crying, or yelling. In situations like this,

- Remain calm
- Encourage the child to relax and breathe easily
- Give appropriate medications



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Exercise-Induced Asthma (EIA)

All children need to exercise to be healthy and fit. Unfortunately, most children **with poorly controlled asthma** will experience asthma symptoms after vigorous exercise.

Don't let fear of an asthma flare-up keep your child from being active. Many professional and Olympic athletes have asthma; they are able to perform because their asthma is in control. The same is true for any child.

EIA usually begins during exercise and peaks 5-10 minutes after stopping exercise; it may occur more easily on cold and dry days. With today's treatment and management strategies, children can successfully control their asthma and participate fully in physical activities most of the time.

What Sports are Best for Children with EIA?

Sports or activities with intermittent periods of activity are least likely to cause asthma symptoms. Activities followed by brief rest periods can allow the person to regain control of their breathing. Such activities include:

- Swimming
- Softball or Baseball
- Volleyball
- Tennis
- Golf
- Some track and field events
- Children with EIA might feel more comfortable playing individual rather than team sports.

Discuss with your health care providers about effective ways of reducing exercise-induced asthma. Often, this will require a pre-treatment before exercise and a good warm-up and cool-down period before and after exercise.

Making Exercise Safer:

- Your child's health care provider may prescribe taking a dose of quick-relief medication before exercise. Depending on the organization and the age of the child, an adult (such as coach, teacher, counselor) might be responsible for keeping the medication. Be sure the medication is available to the child and that the child and childcare worker know when and how to take the medicine.
- Teach your child to warm up for 5 to 15 minutes before exercise. This reduces the chance of a flare-up.
- Talk to your child's gym teacher or coach. Explain when and how your child should take asthma medications. Also explain the importance of warming up. This person should know the symptoms of an asthma flare-up and what to do about it.

**Make sure the coach has a copy of the child's asthma action plan.*



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