

LESSON

Asthma Triggers

Wee Breathers™

*Asthma Education for
Families with Young Children*



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

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LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

NOTES

CONTENT OUTLINE

This lesson is one of seven lessons on asthma management topics. Each lesson is designed to be taught one-on-one with a family by a home visitor or to a group of parents with young children who have asthma by a health professional in a child care setting.

Getting Ready

Things To Do

- Read through the session carefully until you are comfortable with delivering the content. Jot down any notes that may help you.
- Gather all supplies needed for the session. See the *Materials, Equipment, and Supplies* section for more information.
- Make copies of the lesson handouts and the two **Wee Breathers™ Checklists: Asthma-Friendly Home and Asthma-Friendly Child Care**.
- Confirm session date and time.

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- define “triggers;”
- identify the two types of asthma triggers;
- list four things that can make asthma worse; and
- identify triggers within setting using checklist.

Agenda

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| • Greeting & Overview | 10 minutes |
| • What is an Asthma Trigger? | 5 minutes |
| • Activity: What Triggers your Child’s Asthma? | 15 minutes |
| • Trigger Checklist Review | 20 minutes |
| • Summary & Questions | 10 minutes |
| Total Time: | 60 minutes |



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CONTENT OUTLINE

Materials, Equipment, and Supplies

- Glue stick or tape (one per child)
- Scissors (one per child)
- Pencil or pen (one per participant)

Teaching Tools

- TT #1: Pre/Post-Test Answer Key

Handouts

- HO #1: Pre-Test
- HO #2: Triggers – Things That Can Make Your Asthma Worse
(2 pages)
- HO #3: Post-Test

Recommended Resources

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org or www.asmaalergia.org (Spanish)

Asthma and Allergy Friendly Products and Services
www.asthmaandallergyfriendly.com

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov/asthma/triggers.html

Wee Breathers™ – Asthma-Friendly Home: A Checklist for Families

Wee Breathers™ – Asthma-Friendly Child Care: A Checklist for Providers

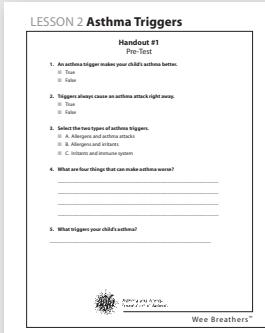


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10 mins.



5 mins.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Greeting & Overview

- Introduce yourself and get acquainted with participant(s).
- Explain that you are going to discuss the following:
What is an asthma trigger?
What are the two types of asthma triggers?
What triggers your child's asthma?

HO #1: Pre-Test

- Distribute pre-test and allow 5 minutes for completion.
Collect when finished.

What is an asthma trigger?

- Ask participant(s) what things they have noticed that make their child's asthma worse.
- Explain that when someone itches, sneezes, coughs, or wheezes, it's because of an asthma or allergy trigger.
Triggers are found everywhere and are different from person to person, including how they react or show symptoms.
- Share that triggers can also have a collective effect.
Sometimes, asthma symptoms are not just the result of exposure to a single trigger, although it may appear that way.
Often, children are sensitive to a number of different triggers that may be present at the same time.
Since we can't see inside a person's lungs, we only see the acute symptoms when they occur.
- Explain that children can be sensitive to a number of different triggers that may be present at the same time.
- Encourage participant(s) to remember that a person may have a very mild reaction to a trigger at one time and much more severe reaction to the same trigger another time.



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CONTENT OUTLINE

What are the two types of asthma triggers?

- Explain that there are two kinds of triggers: **allergens** and **irritants**.

Allergens affect the entire immune system causing an allergic reaction and asthma symptoms.

Some examples of **allergens** are:

- Pollens – from trees, grasses, and weeds
- Dust mites – bugs you can't see that live in fabric and fabric-covered items
- Cockroaches – insects that live in dark, damp areas
- Animal dander – skin and proteins that furry or feathery animals shed
- Mold spores – spores from mold form in warm, damp, and dark places
- Food - some people are allergic to certain foods

Irritants don't cause an allergic reaction, but can make asthma worse by irritating the airways and causing symptoms.

Some examples of **irritants** are:

- Pollution – harmful chemicals in the air (both indoor and outdoor)
- Weather changes
- Illnesses – colds, viruses, GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease – where acid comes up from the stomach)
- Smoke – from cigarettes, cigars, fireplaces, campfires, candles, ovens
- Exercise/hard playing
- Medications
- Strong smells – cleaning fluids, perfume, paint, air fresheners
- Strong emotions – happy or sad
- Remind the participant(s) that both allergens and irritants can result in an asthma episode or attack.
- Transition to the activity.

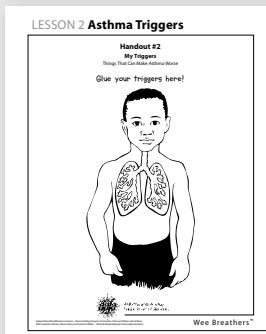
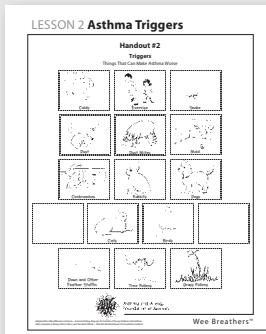


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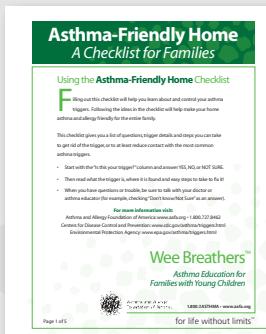
LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

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15 mins.



20 mins.



CONTENT OUTLINE

Activity: What triggers your child's asthma?

Home Visitors – There is a shorter option for this activity if you are short on time (see note below).

Child Care Providers – Teach parents how to do this activity at home with their child.

HO #2: My Triggers – Things That Can Make Your Asthma Worse

- Pass out HO #2 (2 pages).
- Ask the child to identify which things on the page make his/her asthma worse. If the child does not see their trigger, have him or her draw it in one of the blank boxes.
- Ask the child, with help from his or her parent(s), to cut out the triggers he or she identified and paste them onto the second page of HO #2.

Note: If time does not allow for this activity as described, consider asking the child to circle the items that trigger his or her asthma using a marker or crayon. Participant(s) can complete the rest of the activity, cutting and pasting, at a later time.

Trigger Checklist Review

If the participant(s) have completed the **Asthma-Friendly Home – A Checklist for Families** prior to this session at home, review those results at this time. If they have not, use the **Asthma-Friendly Home – A Checklist for Families** to learn what triggers affect this family most. Make sure that parents have a list of their child's triggers.

- Avoiding asthma triggers is an important way to prevent asthma symptoms and can even reduce the need for medicine.

Home Visitors – Encourage participants who have a child in child care to share a copy of the **Asthma-Friendly Child Care – A Checklist for Providers** trigger checklist with their child care provider and a list of the child's asthma triggers. This will help educate the child care provider on how to reduce or eliminate the child's exposure to their asthma triggers while they are at child care.



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10 mins.

CONTENT OUTLINE

Child Care Providers – Demonstrate how your child care site uses the **Asthma-Friendly Child Care – A Checklist for Providers** to reduce or eliminate asthma triggers for children with asthma at their child care site.

Summary & Questions

- Ask participant(s) to summarize what you have discussed today.
Correct any misinformation and emphasize key points.
- Answer any questions.

HO #3: Post-Test

- Distribute post-test and allow 5 minutes for completion.
Collect when finished.
Review questions and answers.
Correct any misinformation and emphasize key points.
- Share local and national asthma resources with the participant(s).
- Confirm next session date and time, if appropriate.
- Thank participant(s) for participating.

After the Session

Things To Do

- Grade pre- and post-tests, using **Teaching Tool #1: Pre- and Post-Test Answer Key**. Plan to review and emphasize key messages, as indicated, at the next session. Provide documentation to your supervisor or manager, if needed.
- Schedule next session, if appropriate.

LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

Handout #3
Post-Test

1. An asthma trigger makes your child's asthma better.
 True
 False

2. Triggers always cause an asthma attack right away.
 True
 False

3. Select the two types of asthma triggers.
 A. Allergens and asthma attack
 B. Irritants and asthma system
 C. Irritants and asthma system

4. What are four things that can make asthma worse?

5. What triggers your child's asthma?

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LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

Teaching Tool #1
Pre- and Post-Test Answer Key

1. An asthma trigger makes your child's asthma better.
 True
 False

2. Triggers always cause an asthma attack right away.
 True
 False

3. Select the two types of asthma triggers.
 A. Allergens and asthma attack
 B. Irritants and asthma system
 C. Irritants and asthma system

4. What are four things that can make asthma worse?
Pollutants
Dust mites
Household cleaner
Cockroaches
Inhalers
Mold spores
Food
Exercise
Hand sanitizers
Strong smells
Strong emotions

5. What triggers your child's asthma?

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LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

Teaching Tool #1 Pre- and Post-Test Answer Key

1. An asthma trigger makes your child's asthma better.

- True
- False

2. Triggers always cause an asthma attack right away.

- True
- False

3. Select the two types of asthma triggers.

- A. Allergens and asthma attacks
- B. Allergens and irritants
- C. Irritants and immune system

4. What are four things that can make asthma worse?

Allergens:

- Pollens
- Dust mites
- Cockroaches
- Animal dander
- Mold spores
- Food

Irritants:

- Pollution
- Weather changes
- Illnesses (colds, viruses, GERD)
- Smoke
- Exercise/Hard Playing
- Medications
- Strong smells
- Strong emotions

5. What triggers your child's asthma?



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LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

Handout #1

Pre-Test

1. An asthma trigger makes your child's asthma better.

- True
- False

2. Triggers always cause an asthma attack right away.

- True
- False

3. Select the two types of asthma triggers.

- A. Allergens and asthma attacks
- B. Allergens and irritants
- C. Irritants and immune system

4. What are four things that can make asthma worse?

5. What triggers your child's asthma?



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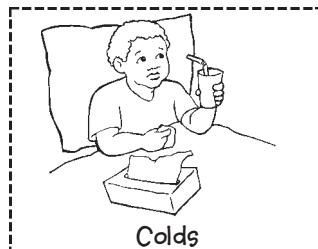
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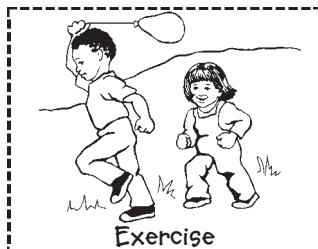
Handout #2

Triggers

Things That Can Make Asthma Worse



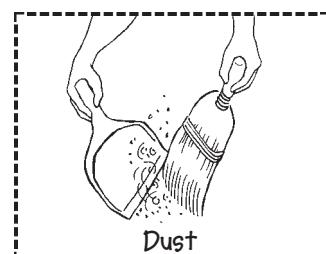
Colds



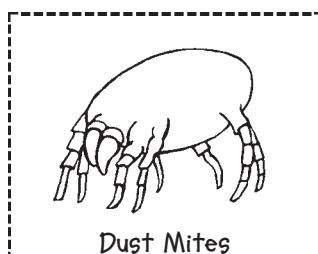
Exercise



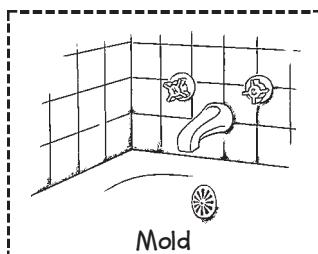
Smoke



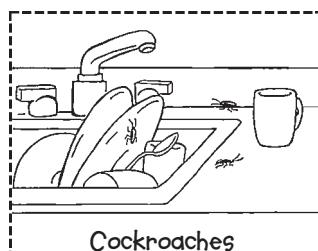
Dust



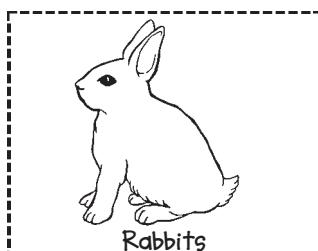
Dust Mites



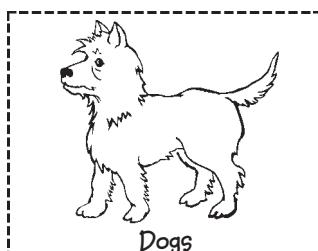
Mold



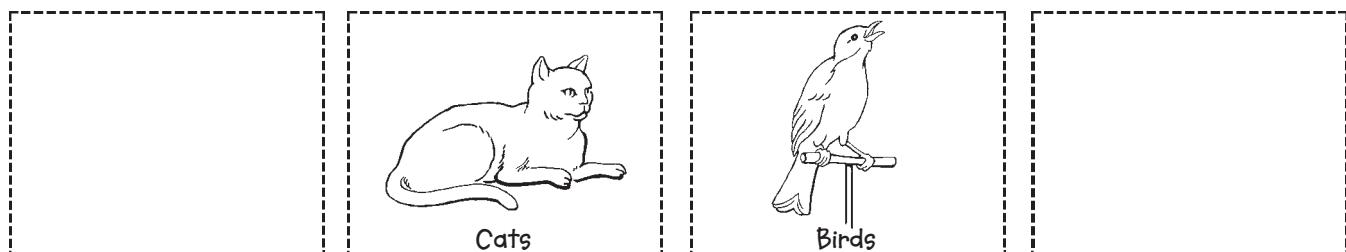
Cockroaches



Rabbits



Dogs



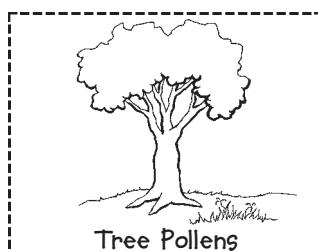
Cats



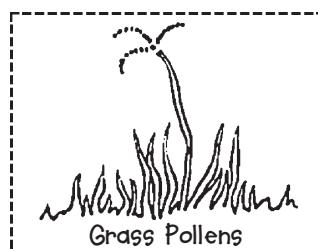
Birds



Down and Other
Feather Stuffin



Tree Pollens



Grass Pollens



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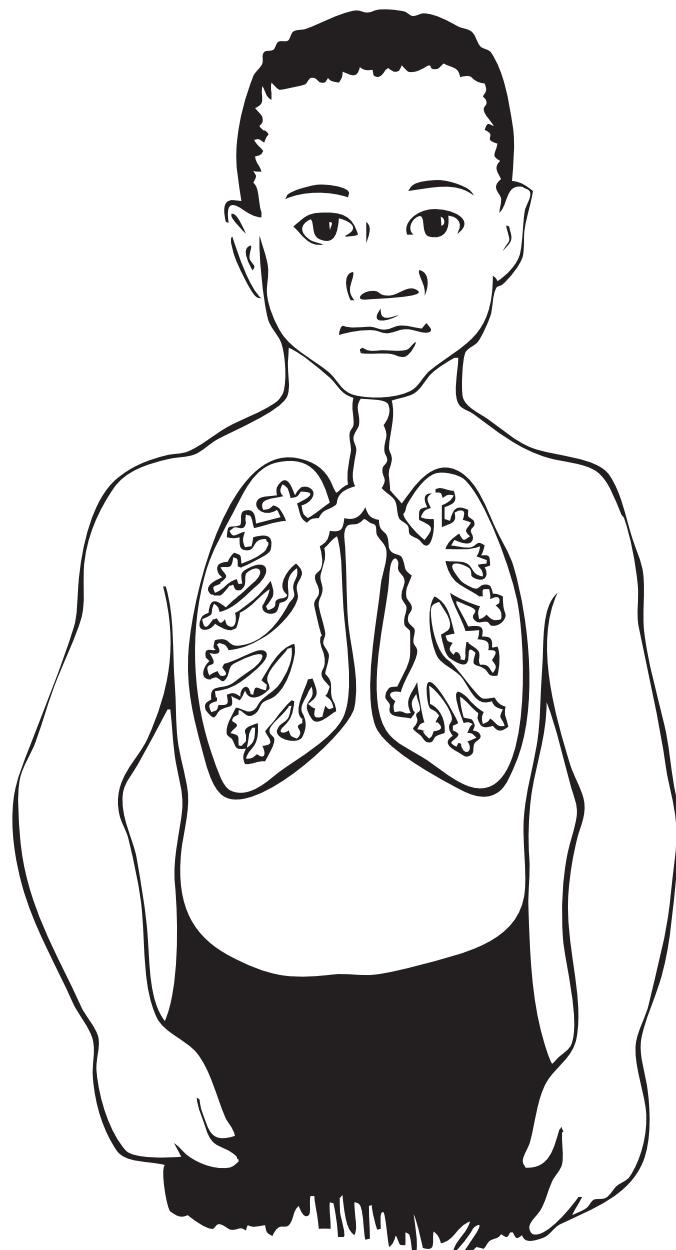
LESSON 2 **Asthma Triggers**

Handout #2

My Triggers

Things That Can Make Asthma Worse

Glue your triggers here!



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LESSON 2 Asthma Triggers

Handout #3

Post-Test

1. An asthma trigger makes your child's asthma better.

- True
- False

2. Triggers always cause an asthma attack right away.

- True
- False

3. Select the two types of asthma triggers.

- A. Allergens and asthma attacks
- B. Allergens and irritants
- C. Irritants and immune system

4. What are four things that can make asthma worse?

5. What triggers your child's asthma?



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Landover, MD 20785
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