

Asthma-Friendly Home

A Checklist for Families

Using this checklist will help you learn about and control your asthma triggers. Following the ideas in the checklist will help make your home asthma and allergy friendly for the entire family.

This checklist gives you a list of questions, trigger details, and steps you can take to get rid of the trigger, or at least reduce contact with the most common asthma triggers.

- Start with the “Is this your trigger?” column and answer YES, NO, or NOT SURE.
- Then read what the trigger is, where it is found, and easy steps to fix it!
- When you have questions or trouble, be sure to talk with your doctor or asthma educator (for example, checking “Don’t know/Not Sure” as an answer).

For more information visit:

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: www.aafa.org • 1.800.727.8462
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html
Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/asthma/triggers.html

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Wee Breathers™

*Asthma Education for
Families with Young Children*



Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

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Is This Your Trigger?	What Is This Trigger?	Where Is It Found?	How To Fix It
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Are asthma/allergy symptoms worse during the spring or fall?

Yes
 spring fall
 No
 Don't know/Not sure

Pollens: Tiny bits of powder from trees or plants that blow around year round.



Pollen is found outside most seasons, but worse in spring and fall.

Spring: Pollen from trees, grasses, and weeds

Fall: Ragweed and weeds

- Keep windows shut; use air conditioning.
- Play inside if it's a bad pollen day.
- Shower from head to toe before bed.
- Take allergy medicine per doctor's orders.
- Go to www.pollen.com to check on pollen levels.

Is there clutter (lots of things laying around) in the bedroom or sleeping area?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure

Dust: Tiny specks of dirt or powdery stuff



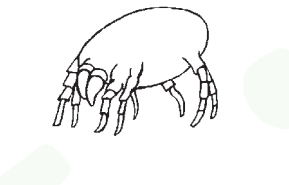
On the surface of things and in cloth and fabrics. Especially worse when there is a lot of clutter and stuff around

- Dust weekly with a damp cloth.
- Keep rooms clutter-free.
- Store items in closed containers, drawers, or behind cabinet doors.
- Vacuum weekly with a HEPA filter vacuum cleaner.

Are there lots of fabric-covered items in the house and bedroom?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure

Dust Mites: Tiny bugs that you can't see with your eyes



In anything made of cloth or fabric like:

- Curtains/drapes
- Wall-to-wall carpeting
- Upholstered furniture
- Decorative pillows and extra frilly bedspreads
- Stuffed animals/toys

- Use allergy-proof mattress and pillow covers.
- Wash sheets and blankets weekly in very hot water – 130°F.
- Keep humidity less than 50% (percent).
- Reduce fabric items. Items should be washable or easy to clean.
- Replace carpet and fabric furniture with washable rugs and slipcovers and wash often in very hot water (130°F).

Is there a problem with cockroaches, rats, or mice? Do you see cockroaches, rats, or mice? Do you see droppings (poop) from the rats or mice?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure

Pests: Cockroaches, rats, or mice



Pests live everywhere, especially in dark, damp places and behind walls, furniture, and clutter.

- Keep all food and garbage in closed and sealed containers.
- Remove clutter like piles of paper, boxes, and bags.
- Fix water leaks.
- Don't leave water sitting in sinks or pots and pans.
- Plug up cracks around windows and doors with caulk.
- Use poison baits and traps instead of bombs and sprays.



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Are asthma/allergy symptoms worse when around furry or feathered animals?

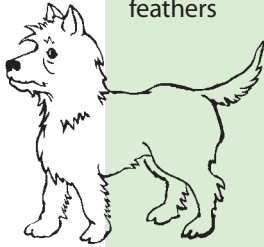
Yes

No

Don't know/Not sure

Furry or Feathered Animals and Pets:

- Dogs
- Cats
- Guinea pigs
- Hamsters
- Birds



Everywhere on any animal with fur or feathers

- Keep all animals out of the bedroom.
- Vacuum weekly with a HEPA filter vacuum cleaner.
- Replace carpets and fabric furniture with washable rugs and slipcovers and wash often in very hot water (130°F).
- Wash hands and face after touching animals.
- Consider keeping pets outdoors if possible or find the pet another loving home if it is still a problem.

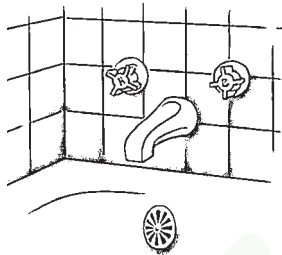
Is there water damage, moisture, or leaks in the home? Do you have damp carpet or leaky plumbing? Can you smell mold or mildew?

Yes

No

Don't know/Not sure

Mold and Mildew
Black, brown, or red spots



Places that are moist and wet like:

- Bathrooms
- Laundry rooms
- Kitchens
- Basements
- Outdoors in leaves, grass, and dirt

- Run fan during a bath or shower and for 20 minutes after a bath or shower.
- Keep areas where mold grows clean and dry (like sinks, bathtubs, and garbage cans).
- Use detergent and water or other safe product to clean, then dry the area.
- Fix leaks quickly.
- Use a dehumidifier.
- Keep kids out of leaf and grass piles.

Is there a food allergy? Has it been diagnosed by a doctor?

Yes

No

Don't know/Not sure

Food:

- Milk
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts
- Eggs
- Soy
- Wheat
- Fish or Shellfish
- Other foods

Any food can trigger a reaction that can make asthma worse.

Avoidance is the surest way to stop a problem from happening.

- Get a food allergy action plan from the doctor and give a copy to the school or child care center.
- Always carry emergency medicine (epinephrine auto-injector) or if too young, be sure staff know where it is and how to use it.
- If emergency medicine is used, follow up with the doctor right away.

Do asthma/allergy symptoms get worse when angry or when excited?

Yes

No

Don't know/Not sure

Emotions
Muscles tighten up and breathing rate increases when emotions are strong.

Strong emotions like laughing hard or crying can trigger symptoms.



- Laughing is great! But, if it is causing asthma symptoms, relaxation is needed.
- Learn how to express emotions without yelling or anger. Breathe deeply and slowly when feeling stressed-out.



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Is This Your Trigger?

What Is This Trigger?

Where Is It Found?

How To Fix It

Are asthma/allergy symptoms worse on hot or cold days or when around running vehicles like cars and buses?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/Not sure

Extreme Weather and Air Pollution: Changes in temperature and specks of dirt and chemicals in the air



Indoors and outdoors any time of year

- Check air quality especially in the summer: www.AirNow.gov.
- On bad air pollution days, stay indoors, keep windows shut, and use air conditioning or fans.
- Prepare for really cold or hot days: stay cool and indoors if you are hot and drink water and sports drinks if you are active; stay warm and cover your mouth and nose when outside in cold weather.

Does getting a cold or flu make asthma/allergy symptoms worse?

- Yes No
- Don't know/Not sure

Or are there other illnesses (like GERD – “heartburn”) that worsen symptoms?

- Yes GERD
- No Other
- Don't know/Not sure

Colds, Viruses, and Other Illnesses



Colds, viruses, and flu are spread from person to person by contact with hands or objects.

GERD causes heartburn. It is a disease that causes a burning feeling in the chest that happens when stomach acid backs up.

- Wash hands often. Use hand sanitizers when soap and water are not available.
- Sneeze or cough into the fold of your elbow, not hands.
- Do not share food or drinks with anyone who has a cold, flu, virus, or other illness.
- Stay active and get plenty of sleep to boost your health.
- Do not lay down 2 to 3 hours after eating to ease GERD symptoms.
- Avoid foods that cause GERD symptoms.

Does anyone smoke in your home or car?

Or are there other sources of smoke like fireplaces and barbecues?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know/Not sure

Smoke



Smoke from any source can make asthma worse:

- Cigarettes, cigars, and pipes
- Fireplaces/firepits
- Incense and candles
- Barbeques or grills
- Wood Stoves
- Wildfires
- Outdoor trash burning
- Controlled field-burning

- Avoid smoke from all sources!
- STOP smoking.
- Talk with your doctor about ways to stop smoking, or visit www.smokefree.gov, or call 1-800-Quit-Now (800-784-8669).
- If someone must smoke, they must smoke outside your home.
- No smoking in cars!



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Does shortness of breath or feeling tired easily occur when running and playing hard?

Do asthma/allergy symptoms get worse during or after sports or gym class?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure

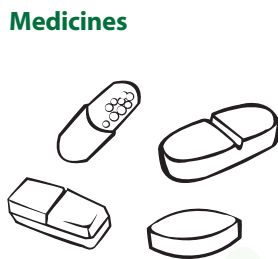
Exercise-Induced Asthma
 Symptoms get worse during or after sports, running, or playing hard.



- Talk with your doctor about the use of quick-relief (rescue) medicine before and after activity.
- Warm up for 10 to 15 minutes before activity with jumping jacks, walking, or stretching.
- Cool down after activity for 10 minutes.
- Breathe through your nose to warm the air going into the lungs.
- If it is cold outside, cover your mouth and nose with a scarf.

Are asthma/allergy symptoms worse after using any medicines?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure



Common medicines include:

- Aspirin
- Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Naprosyn
- Beta-blockers (Corgard, Inderal, Normodyne, Pindolo, Trandate)
- ACE Inhibitors (Accupril, Aceon, Altace, Captopril, Lotensin, Monopril, Univasc, Vasotec, Zestril)

- Avoid medicines that are a known trigger.
- Tell your doctor about any herbs, supplements, or vitamins you are taking.
- ACE Inhibitors can cause a chronic cough which could be mistaken for an asthma symptom.

Are asthma/allergy symptoms worse around chemicals or products with strong odors?

Yes
 No
 Don't know/Not sure



Any strong-smelling item might trigger an asthma flare-up.

Common ones include:

- Cleaners
- Bleach
- Pesticides
- Air Fresheners or Plug Ins
- Potpourri
- Perfume/Aftershave
- Cosmetics
- Lotions
- Paints
- Glues

- Avoid items that have strong smells.
- Switch to less toxic "free and clear" or "green" products.
- Learn how to make your own safe and "green" cleaners.
- Avoid painting or using other chemicals when a child with asthma is present and open windows and use fans.
- Use an exhaust fan or open a window when using an unvented gas or kerosene space heater or a gas stove.



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