



What are asthma triggers?

An asthma attack can occur when you are exposed to things in the environment such as house dust mites and tobacco smoke. These are called asthma triggers. Your triggers can be very different from those of someone else with asthma. Know your triggers and learn how to avoid them. Watch out for an attack when you can't avoid the triggers.

What are some common asthma triggers?

- **Tobacco Smoke**

Tobacco smoke is unhealthy for everyone, especially people with asthma. If you have asthma and you smoke, quit smoking. "Secondhand smoke" is smoke created by a smoker and breathed in by a second person. Secondhand smoke can trigger an asthma attack. If you have asthma, people should never smoke near you, in your home, in your car, or wherever you may spend a lot of time.



- **Dust Mites**

Dust mites are tiny bugs that are in almost every home. If you have asthma, dust mites can trigger an asthma attack. To prevent attacks, use mattress covers and pillowcase covers to make a barrier between dust mites and yourself. Don't use down-filled pillows, quilts, or comforters. Remove stuffed animals and clutter from your bedroom. Wash your bedding weekly.



- **Air Pollution**

Pollution can include indoor pollution caused by gases from inefficient cooking or heating devices that are not vented. Outdoor air pollution can come from factories, cars, and other sources. Pay attention to air quality forecasts on radio, television, and the Internet, and check your newspaper to plan your activities for when air pollution levels will be low.



- **Cockroach Allergen**

Cockroaches and their droppings can trigger an asthma attack. Get rid of cockroaches in your home by removing as many water and food sources as you can. Cockroaches are often found where food is eaten and crumbs are left behind. At least every 2 to 3 days, vacuum or sweep areas that might attract cockroaches. Use roach traps or gels to cut down on the number of cockroaches in your home.



- **Pets**

Pets can trigger an asthma attack. If you think a pet may be causing attacks, you may want to find the pet another home. If you can't or don't want to find a new home for the pet, keep it out of the bedroom where the person with asthma sleeps.



Bathe pets every week and keep them outside as much as you can. People with asthma are not allergic to their pet's fur, so trimming the pet's fur will not help your asthma. If you have a pet, vacuum often. If your floors have a hard surface, such as wood or tile, damp mop them every week.

- **Mold**

Breathing in mold can trigger an asthma attack. Get rid of mold in your home to help control your attacks. High humidity (moisture in the air) can make mold grow. An air conditioner or dehumidifier will help keep the humidity level low. Get a small tool called a hygrometer to check humidity levels and keep them as low as you can—no higher than 50%. Humidity levels change over the course of a day, so check the humidity levels more than once a day. Fix water leaks, which let mold grow behind walls and under floors.



- **Smoke from Burning Wood or Grass**

Smoke from burning wood or other plants is made up of a mix of harmful gases and small particles. Breathing in too much of this smoke can cause an asthma attack. If you can, avoid burning wood in your home. If a wildfire is causing poor air quality in your area, pay attention to air quality forecasts on radio, television, the Internet, and in your newspaper. Plan your activities for when air pollution levels will be low.



- **Other triggers** such as strong odors and sprays, and other allergens like pollen, peanuts or tree nuts, can also trigger an asthma attack.



Other asthma triggers include:

- **Emotional stress.** Emotional stress, such as intense anger, crying, or laughing, can cause hyperventilation and airway narrowing, triggering an asthma attack.
- **Influenza (flu).** Get the flu vaccine every year to help prevent the flu, which can increase the risk of an asthma attack.
- **Medicines.** Some people who have severe asthma may be sensitive to medicines, such as aspirin, and may experience serious respiratory problems. Tell your doctor about all medicines you or your child currently take.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity – especially in cold air – is a frequent asthma trigger. Symptoms may not appear until after several minutes of sustained exercise. (If symptoms appear sooner than this, it usually means you need to adjust your treatment.) With proper treatment, you do not need to limit your physical activity.

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Adapted from: CDC. Common Asthma Triggers. Access at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/triggers.html>

Author: Ruti Volk, MSI

Reviewer: Karl Rew, MD

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