

FOR ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION ON

ASTHMA AND

RELATED ISSUES, VISIT

www.alamn.org/infocenter

www.healthhouse.org

www.health.state.mn.us/asthma



+ AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION,
of Minnesota

490 Concordia Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55103-2441

800.LUNG.USA

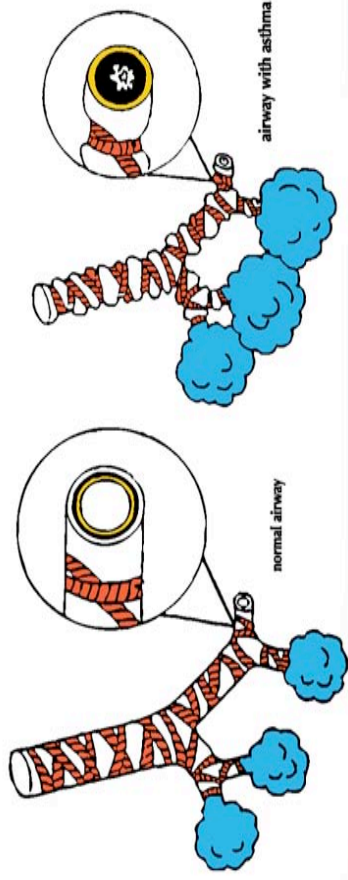
www.ALAMN.org



Simple steps
to remove
asthma
triggers in
your home



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Raising the Standard for Healthier Indoor Environments



Asthma is a chronic (long-term) disease with:

- Swelling of the airway (the tubes that move air through your lungs)
- Tightening of the muscles around the airway
- Mucus production (a thick, sticky substance in the airway)

Triggers often cause asthma symptoms. Each person with asthma may have one or more triggers. The triggers for one person with asthma may not be the same as the triggers for another person with asthma. There may be triggers in your home that make asthma symptoms worse. By reducing triggers, a person with asthma will have fewer symptoms.

You can find out your asthma triggers in two ways:

1. Testing done by your doctor (using a skin or blood test)
2. When you have asthma symptoms, look back over the past 6 to 10 hours. Think about what you have done, come in contact with, or eaten. Make a list. After doing this 3 or 4 times, you may see common things on your list.



Here are some simple steps you can take in your home to reduce common asthma triggers.

Cold and Flu Germs

Viruses that cause upper respiratory infections are the most common trigger for people with asthma. To reduce exposure to cold and flu germs:

- Wash hands after using the bathroom, coughing, or blowing your nose.
- Wash hands before cooking, eating, or touching food
- Use paper towels in the kitchen and bathroom instead of a regular towel
- Don't share cups, toothbrushes, towels, or tissues
- Don't forget to get your annual flu shot



Secondhand Smoke

To keep people with asthma away from tobacco smoke:

- Do not allow anyone to smoke in the house, garage, or car or near open windows. Smoke travels easily from one part of the home to another.
- Do not hold your child with asthma after smoking. Smoke gets into your clothes and hair and can be inhaled by your child.

For help quitting, contact your health plan or the American Lung Association HelpLine at 1-800-LUNG-USA

Other tips:

- Use the exhaust fan in the bathroom when bathing or showering
- Use exhaust vent above stove when cooking
- Throw away items with mold that cannot be easily cleaned. Such items may include sheet rock, insulation, carpet/carpet pad, and things made of wood and paper
- Clean moldy surfaces in the home by scrubbing surfaces with a stiff brush, hot water, and non-ammonia soap. Rinse. Let dry. Soap and water are sufficient to kill mold. You only need to disinfect if the water is caused by a flood or sewage. In that case, clean surface with ½ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water. Let dry.

Dust, Dander, and Dust Mite Control

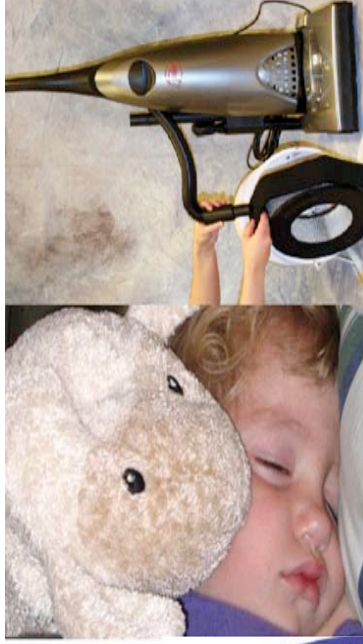
Pet Dander

To decrease exposure to pet hair and skin flakes (*dander*), remove the pet from the home. If you do have a pet:

- Keep the pet out of the bedroom of the person with asthma
- Keep the pet off furniture or any place the person with asthma may sit or lay down
- Vacuum carpets, rugs, and upholstered furniture and dust at least weekly

Strong Odors

Strong odors can make asthma symptoms worse. Reduce the use of fragrances, air fresheners, candles, and other cleaning products with strong odors in the home and environment of the person with asthma.



Dehumidifiers

can also help reduce moisture in your home. To see if you need a dehumidifier, buy a humidity gauge at your local hardware store (*under \$5*). Keep humidity levels between 35 and 55%. Look for a dehumidifier labeled Energy Star (*most energy efficient*). Place dehumidifier in the basement or the part of the house that is moist or damp.

- Run the dehumidifier 24 hours a day in the spring, summer, and fall
- Empty the reservoir daily

Mattress and pillow covers

can reduce exposure to dust mites. Dust mites are very small (*microscopic*) bugs that are in all homes, even very clean ones.

- Enclose all pillows, the mattress, and box spring of the person with asthma
- Look for words like “allergen free” on the label of the pillow or mattress cover

HEPA vacuums (*stands for High Efficiency Particulate Air*) collect dust and dirt that can be inhaled.

- Select a vacuum labeled “HEPA” or “allergen”
- Vacuum at least weekly
- Move vacuum over carpet and rugs slowly
- Vacuum at different angles to catch all of the dirt
- Check the vacuum bag monthly, and change the bag before it gets full
- Empty bag-less vacuums outside
- If possible, vacuum

when the person with asthma is not at home

For more information about type and care of dehumidifiers, go to www.HealthHouse.org/consumer/tipsheets.asp

Other tips: Wash all bedding, including comforter and blankets, each week in hot water. If your child sleeps with a stuffed animal and it is washable, wash it weekly in hot water.



Air cleaners collect pollen, dust, dirt, and pet hair in the air.

Be sure to use a mechanical air cleaner (one with a HEPA filter). Some air cleaners claim to “activate oxygen,” “energize oxygen,” or “make pure air.” These air cleaners put ozone (a toxic gas) into the air. Do not use them. In addition, ion generating air cleaners are not recommended for people with asthma.

- Place the air cleaner in the bedroom of the person with asthma
- Run the air cleaner 24 hours a day—do not turn it off
- Change or clean the filter by following the instructions that come with the air cleaner. A dirty air filter looks like it has dryer lint on it. It is best to replace the filter. However, you can lengthen the life of your filter by simply vacuuming the filter well with your vacuum hose.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturer’s (AHAM)

seal (*usually found on the back of an air cleaner’s box*) will list three CADR (Clean Air Delivery Rate)

For information on the types of air cleaners, go to <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/airclean.html#types%20of%20air%20cleaners>

numbers—one for tobacco smoke, one for pollen, and one for dust. The CADR indicates volume of air that is filtered by the air cleaner. The higher the numbers, the faster the unit filters the air.

Mold

Mold needs water to live. Therefore, find the source of the water and correct the problem. A common source of baseline moisture is gutter down spouts. Make sure your gutter down spouts are connected to an extension that takes the water away from your house.

If you rent, talk with your landlord about large water problems.

For more information about mold removal, go to www.health.state.mn.us and enter “mold in homes” in the search area or <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/mold/index.html>