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REDUCING ALLERGENS IN YOUR HOME

ASTHMA

Avoiding asthma triggers may help reduce the inflammation in your lungs, reduce symptoms, and reduce your need for emergency relief medication. Indoor allergy triggers, such as dust or animal dander, could affect your asthma if you are sensitive to them, and using a strategy that removes or minimizes these allergens may be helpful.

Your health care provider can help you identify your sensitivities by looking at your medical history or through allergy testing.

Keep in mind that controlling any allergen usually requires a combination of approaches, and reducing allergens is just one part of a comprehensive asthma management plan.

Here are some tips to get started. These tips tend to work better when you use several of them together. Your health care provider can help you decide which ones may be right for you.

ALLERGENS

Animal Dander: Some people are allergic to the flakes of skin or dried saliva from animals with fur or hair. If you are sensitive and decide to have a pet:

- Consider keeping the pet outdoors.
- Try limiting your pet to commonly used areas indoors.

Dust Mites: These tiny bugs, too small to see, can be found in every home—in dust, mattresses, pillows, carpets, cloth furniture, sheets and blankets, clothes, stuffed toys, and other cloth-covered items. If you are sensitive:

- Mattress and pillow covers that prevent dust mites from going through them should not be used alone; consider using them along with air filtration or carpet removal.
- Consider reducing indoor humidity to below 60 percent. Dehumidifiers or central air conditioning systems can do this.



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For more information and resources on asthma, visit nhlbi.nih.gov/BreatheBetter.

Cockroaches and Other Rodents: Pests like these leave droppings that may trigger your asthma. If you are sensitive:

- Consider an integrated pest management plan.
- Keep food and garbage in closed containers to decrease the chances for attracting roaches and other rodents.
- Use poison baits, powders, gels, or paste (for example, boric acid), or traps to catch and kill the pests. If you use a spray to kill roaches, stay out of the room until the odor goes away.

Indoor Mold: If mold is a trigger for you, you may want to:

- Explore professional mold removal or cleaning to support complete removal.
- Wear gloves to avoid touching mold with your bare hands if you must remove it yourself.
- Always ventilate the area if you use a cleaner with bleach or a strong smell.

Pollen and Outdoor Mold: When pollen or mold spore counts are high you should try to:

- Keep your windows closed.
- If you can, stay indoors with the windows closed from late morning to afternoon, when pollen and some mold spore counts are at their highest.
- If you do go outside, change your clothes as soon as you get inside, and put dirty clothes in a covered hamper or container to avoid spreading allergens inside your home.
- Ask your health care provider if you need to take or increase your anti-inflammatory medicine before the allergy season starts.

IRRITANTS

Tobacco Smoke:

- If you smoke, visit smokefree.gov or ask your health care provider for ways to help you quit.
- Ask family members to quit smoking.
- Do not allow smoking in your home or car.

Smoke, Strong Odors, Sprays, and Fumes:

- Avoid using a wood-burning stove, kerosene heater, or fireplace, if possible. Vent gas stoves to outside the house.
- Try to stay away from strong odors and sprays, such as perfume, talcum powder, hair spray, and paints.

Vacuum Cleaning:

- Try to get someone to vacuum for you once or twice a week if vacuum cleaning makes your asthma worse. Stay out of rooms while they are being vacuumed and for a short while afterward.
- If you must vacuum yourself, using high efficiency particulate air-filtration (HEPA) filter vacuum cleaners may be helpful.



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