



Asthma Triggers

When you have asthma, certain things can make your symptoms worse. These are called triggers. Learn what triggers an asthma attack for you, and avoid the triggers when you can. The following factors can cause asthma symptoms and should be reduced as much as possible.

1. Allergens (dust mites, animals, molds, pollens, cockroaches). Steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

In the bedroom:

- a. Enclose all pillows and mattresses in allergy-proof covers*.
- b. Keep the bedroom quiet for one hour before bedtime.
- c. Bedding - No pillows or comforters with feathers. Wash your bedding each week in hot water.
- d. Always change clothes before lying in bed. Never wear clothes worn outdoors or after contact with animals onto the bed.
- e. Carpets should be removed.
- f. Keep bedroom windows closed. Air conditioner could be used.

In the house:

- a. Avoid lying down on upholstered furniture.
- b. Keep humidity low. Avoid humidifiers. Maintain a relative humidity below 50 percent in your home.

A dehumidifier or air conditioner can help keep humidity low, and a hygrometer (available at hardware stores) can measure humidity levels.

- c. Vacuum one to two times per week. Leave the room for one hour after cleaning/vacuuming. If possible, use a vacuum with a double-layered microfilter bag or a HEPA filter.
- d. Optimally, if animal allergic, the animal should find another home. If in the home, wash or wipe the animal twice per week and never let animal in the bedroom.
- e. Drive with windows closed and air conditioning on re-circulated air.
- f. Keep windows closed sunrise to 10 a.m., and when it is windy.
- g. Don't collect too many indoor plants. Soil encourages mold growth.

2. Respiratory infections/colds/flu: It is critical that medicines are started/increased at the first sign of a cold as prescribed by your doctor. Good and frequent hand washing is important, especially before eating. Get flu shots are essential every year.

3. Inhaled irritants: Smoke, fumes, sprays, perfumes, powders, cleaning fluids and cooking odors, including occupational exposures need to be minimized. Stay indoors as much as possible on high pollution/"Spare the Air" days.

4. Exercise: The ability to exercise is essential for all asthmatics, but exercise needs to be avoided with asthma flares. Inhaler use, such as albuterol, before exercise can be very helpful. Ask your doctor about this.

5. Stress/anxiety: Stress can actually aggravate asthma or mimic asthma. Using a peak flow meter can help tell how well you are breathing.

6. Medication: For some people, asthma may be triggered by aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), and Naproxen (Aleve), medicine for high blood pressure and irregular heartbeats.

7. Foods: Avoid known food allergies. Foods containing sulfites, especially wine/beer and dried fruit, and some other processed foods can sometimes trigger asthma.

8. Acid Reflux (GERD): You can have GERD without having heartburn, and this can trigger your asthma. Other symptoms of GERD include cough, wheeze, frequent throat clearing and/or hoarseness due to excess mucous in the airway. Ask your doctor about this.

For more asthma resources visit sutterhealth.org/services/asthma