

Common Asthma Triggers and Tips for Control



Not everyone reacts the same way to the same asthma triggers. Although it may be hard to always avoid them, here are some ways to help manage common asthma triggers.

Pollen and Outdoor Mold

- Keep windows closed; use air-conditioning when possible.
- Stay indoors from late morning to afternoon. Pollen and mold spores are highest at that time.
- If you must be outdoors during high-pollen times, shower after exposure.

Animal Dander

Dander is flakes of skin or dried saliva from animals with fur or feathers.

- Wash pets weekly, if possible.
- Keep furry or feathered pets out of your home.
- Keep pets out of your bedroom or at least keep the door closed.
- HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters may reduce airborne allergens from cats and dogs.

Exercise

Many of the 34.1 million Americans who have had asthma have asthma symptoms when they exercise. This is called exercise-induced asthma (EIA). Symptoms of EIA may start 5 to 20 minutes into exercise, and may go on for some time after stopping exercise.

- **Warm up, cool down**—Warming up before exercising, and gradually cooling down after, may reduce flare-ups.
- **Keep out the cold**—Cold air is a common asthma trigger. Use a loose scarf to cover your nose and mouth in cold weather. If you can, exercise in a warm and humid place.
- **Medicine**—Your doctor may have prescribed a medicine to help control EIA. As always, follow the doctor's advice about medicine and exercise.

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Exercise (*continued*)

- **Choose the right sports**—In general, swimming and sports with short bursts of energy, such as football, baseball, and sprinting, are usually fine for people with EIA. However, sports that need long periods of exertion with little or no rest, such as hockey, long-distance running, and soccer, may cause more asthma flare-ups. These sports should not be off limits, but they should be approached with caution. As always, talk to the doctor first.

Tobacco Smoke

- Do not allow smoking in your home or car.

Dust Mites

Dust mites are tiny bugs that are found in every home.

- Put your pillow in a special dust-proof cover and wash the pillowcase each week in hot water.
- Wash the sheets and blankets on your bed every week in hot water.
- Keep stuffed toys out of the bed or wash the toys weekly in hot water.

Cockroaches

- Keep food and garbage in closed containers. Never leave food out.
- If a spray is used to kill roaches, stay out of the room until the odor goes away.

Indoor Mold

- Fix leaky faucets, pipes, or other sources of water that have mold around them.
- Clean moldy surfaces with a cleaner that has bleach in it.

Smoke, Strong Odors, and Sprays

- Try not to use a wood-burning stove, kerosene heater, or fireplace.
- Try to stay away from strong odors and sprays, such as perfume, talcum powder, hair spray, and paint.