



# Asthma is a **serious** lung disease.

During an asthma attack, the airways get narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Symptoms of asthma include wheezing, shortness of breath, and coughing. Asthma can even cause death.

If you have asthma or a child with asthma, you are not alone.

About 17 million Americans have asthma. Asthma is the leading cause of long-term illness in children.

The air that children breathe **can make a difference.**

Asthma may be triggered by allergens and irritants that are common in homes. Help your child breathe easier: consult a doctor and reduce asthma triggers in your home.

**Act now  
against  
asthma  
at home.**



United States  
Environmental Protection Agency  
Mail Code 6604J  
Washington, DC 20460

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EPA/402-F-99-005  
July 1999

Office of Air and Radiation



**Clear Your  
Home Of  
Asthma Triggers**

**YOUR CHILDREN WILL BREATHE EASIER**

# CLEAR YOUR HOME OF ASTHMA TRIGGERS



## SECONDHAND SMOKE

Asthma can be triggered by the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke breathed out by a smoker.

- Choose not to smoke in your home or car and do not allow others to do so either.

## DUST MITES



Dust mites are too small to be seen but are found in every home. Dust mites live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric-covered furniture, bedcovers, clothes, and stuffed toys.

- Wash sheets and blankets once a week in hot water.
- Choose washable stuffed toys, wash them often in hot water, and dry thoroughly. Keep stuffed toys off beds.
- Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof (allergen-impermeable) zippered covers.

## PETS

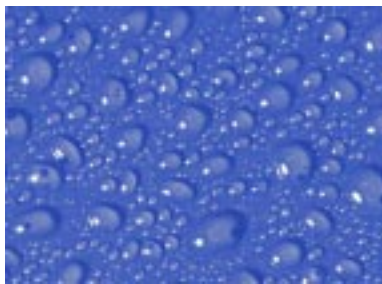
Your pet's skin flakes, urine, and saliva can be asthma triggers.



- Consider keeping pets outdoors or even finding a new home for your pets, if necessary.
- Keep pets out of the bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times, and keep the door closed.
- Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys.

## MOLDS

Molds grow on damp materials. The key to mold control is moisture control. If mold is a problem in your home, clean up the mold and get rid of excess water or moisture. Lowering the moisture also helps reduce other triggers, such as dust mites and cockroaches.



- Wash mold off hard surfaces and dry completely. Absorbent materials, such as ceiling tiles and carpet, with mold may need to be replaced.
- Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water.
- Keep drip pans in your air conditioner, refrigerator, and dehumidifier clean and dry.
- Use exhaust fans or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking, or using the dishwasher.
- Vent clothes dryers to the outside.
- Maintain low indoor humidity, ideally between 30-50% relative humidity. Humidity levels can be measured by hygrometers which are available at local hardware stores.

## PESTS

Droppings or body parts of pests such as cockroaches or rodents can be asthma triggers.



- Do not leave food or garbage out.
- Store food in airtight containers.
- Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away.
- Try using poison baits, boric acid (for cockroaches), or traps first before using pesticidal sprays.

If sprays are used:

- Limit the spray to infested area.
- Carefully follow instructions on the label.
- Make sure there is plenty of fresh air when you spray, and keep the person with asthma out of the room.



Not all of the asthma triggers addressed in this brochure affect every person with asthma. Not all asthma triggers are listed here. See your doctor or health care provider for more information.

### Also...

**HOUSE DUST** may contain asthma triggers. Remove dust often with a damp cloth, and vacuum carpet and fabric-covered furniture to reduce dust build-up. Allergic people should leave the area being vacuumed. Using vacuums with high efficiency filters or central vacuums may be helpful.

When your local weather forecast announces an **OZONE ACTION DAY**, stay indoors as much as possible.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
<http://www.epa.gov/iaq>

EPA Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse  
(800) 438-4318

National Asthma Education and Prevention Program  
*Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma*, 1997  
(301) 592-8573

Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics, Inc.  
(800) 878-4403

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology  
(800) 822-2762

American Lung Association  
(800) LUNG-USA

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (800) 7ASTHMA