

Your Child's Asthma: Avoiding Triggers



Triggers are things that make your child's asthma worse. Helping your child avoid triggers helps control his or her asthma. Thinking about the things you need to do to help your child avoid triggers can be overwhelming. Start by working to control the ones that affect your child the most.

Irritants and other common triggers

Irritants affect all people with asthma.

Smoke can trigger asthma. To protect your child:

- If you smoke, quit. This may be the single best thing you can do to help control your child's asthma. Ask your healthcare provider for help in quitting. Contact the [American Lung Association](#) to learn about stop-smoking programs and support groups.
- Encourage any smokers who are members of your household to quit
- Keep your home and car free of tobacco smoke, incense, and smoke from fireplaces
- Keep your child out of smoky places

A cold or the flu can trigger asthma symptoms. To avoid cold and flu germs:

- Have your child wash his or her hands often with plain soap and water. (Use an alcohol-based cleanser when you don't have access to water.)
- Have your child get a yearly flu shot

Scents and chemicals can trigger asthma. To reduce these triggers:

- Use pump sprays instead of aerosols
- Switch to unscented soap, lotion, toilet paper, and cleaning products
- Don't use air fresheners or perfume
- If you have a gas stove, use the exhaust fan when the stove is on. Make sure pilot lights are adjusted properly. (Your utility company can help with this.)

Some types of weather can trigger asthma. Wind spreads pollen. Heat traps air pollution. Cold air can be a trigger all by itself. The best way to prevent weather from triggering asthma is to make sure your child takes his or her long-term controller medicine. If cold air is a trigger, wearing a scarf over the nose and mouth when outside on cold days may help.

Allergy triggers

In children with asthma, allergies can trigger flare-ups. The following are some common allergens.

Dust mites are tiny bugs that live in house dust. Cleaning or removing things that trap dust helps to control them. Start with your child's bedroom:

- Wash all bedding and stuffed animals weekly in hot (130°F) water.
- Vacuum every week. Using a vacuum with a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter is best.
- Put allergen-proof covers over pillows and mattresses.

Furry or feathered animals are common sources of allergens. If your child is allergic, keep these animals away from your child. If you have a furry or feathered pet, try the following:

- Keep the pet out of your child's bedroom. Bathe the pet weekly if possible.
- Be sure that your child has no down (feather) pillows or bedding.
- You may have to find the pet a new home. This can be sad, but it is the best option for your child's health.

Mold thrives in damp places. To reduce mold:

- Fix leaks
- Use a dehumidifier to help keep air drier (30% to 50% humidity is ideal)

Pollen from grasses, trees, and weeds can cause allergies.

- If you have an air conditioner, use it during seasons when a lot of pollen is in the air. This allows you to keep windows closed, so less pollen gets in.
- Make sure your child bathes and changes clothes after playing outside.

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