

# Reducing Asthma Triggers in Your Home

Compiled by Carol Shenon, American Lung Association of California



Asthma triggers are things that can set off a child's asthma attack or make it worse. These triggers differ from child to child. A great way to help children avoid having asthma attacks (and create a healthier environment for everyone) is to reduce or remove potential asthma triggers from your home.

| Triggers                                | To Reduce or Remove:  |
|---|---|
| Dust                                    | Dust using a damp cloth. Clean floors with a damp mop, not a broom. Vacuum carpets weekly using a vacuum with high efficiency filter or at least a double-lined bag. Remove wall-to-wall carpeting if possible. Wash bedding and stuffed animals weekly in very hot water. Enclose mattresses and pillows in allergy proof covers. Reduce clutter. Clean when children not present.   |
| Chemicals/<br>Strong<br>Smells          | Avoid using scented products including hairsprays, perfumes, powders, air fresheners and deodorizers, incense, and laundry products. Try not to use cleansers with strong odors and use safer, nontoxic cleaning products when possible. Open windows and clean when children not present. Avoid art supplies with scents or fumes.   |
| Mold                                    | Fix all water leaks and control moisture. Use exhaust fans and open windows for ventilation. Scrub mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, and dry completely. Clean when children not present. May need professional help if moldy area greater than 10 square feet (roughly 3' x 3' patch). Moldy ceiling tiles, carpet, and other "soft" materials should be thrown away. Replace wet carpeting if not dry within 24 hours (if water dirty, then always replace). Remove indoor plants. |
| Pests                                   | Store food and garbage in tightly closed containers. Clean up crumbs and spills. Fix leaky plumbing, roof, and other water sources. Seal cracks where insects can enter and clean up cluttered areas. Use enclosed baits and traps (keep out of children's reach) preferably with boric acid and NOT pesticide sprays or bombs.   |
| Animals                                 | Best to find another home for furry or feathered pets. If you can't, keep pets outside or in limited areas. Wash hands after touching animals.  |
| Weather<br>Changes                      | Stay indoors on very hot or very cold days. When it's cold, have child breathe through nose or wear a scarf over mouth and breathe through mouth.   |
| Tobacco<br>Smoke/<br>Fireplace<br>Smoke | Don't allow smoking around or near children, outdoors as well as indoors. Don't allow smoking in any vehicles used to transport children. Don't use fireplaces when children present and help them avoid smoke from fires.  |
| Air<br>Pollution<br>and Pollen          | On poor air quality or high pollen level days, limit outdoor activities. When possible, use air conditioning and keep windows closed. Don't allow children to be around idling buses, trucks, or cars. When children not present, clean up cut grass, leaves, and clippings in outdoor play areas.  |
| Colds and<br>Flu                        | Have children and family members wash hands often. Children should avoid people with colds or the flu. It is encouraged that children ages 6 months and older with asthma get yearly flu shots.   |
| Exercise                                | If directed by doctor, have child take asthma medication before exercise. Have children warm up before and cool down after exercise. Plan alternate indoor activities on high pollen or poor air quality days.  |

References: American Lung Association of California asthma education materials, the California Childcare Health Program's "Asthma Information Handbook for Early Care and Education Providers", and EPA's "A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home."