

Asthma Trigger Control Plan

Asthma is a lung condition that causes your airways to be very sensitive. When exposed to an allergen, or stimuli that makes your airways react, it can lead to an asthma episode. If you have an allergy to something, your airways may become swollen, tighten up, and produce excess mucus when one or more triggers are present.

- Ask your doctor to help you determine your triggers. This may involve skin or blood tests, and then different treatments to improve your asthma.
- Talk with your doctor about **how well treatments are working to manage your condition and the changes you are making in your environment**, to reduce triggers.
- If you notice an asthma trigger, pay attention to times and locations where the signs occur. Consider exposure to irritants from industries located near your home or workplace, including your hobbies. Keep a journal of exposure and reaction and share them with your doctor.
- If you cannot avoid certain allergens, your doctor may consider allergy shots. Regular allergy shots, also called immunotherapy, give you constant exposure to specific allergens. The goal is to build up your immunity and reduce the reaction you have, but shots do not work for everyone.

More on next page →

Learn more about your health care.

Common Asthma Triggers

Dust Mites

Dust mites are found in most homes in bedding, upholstery, and carpeting. They excrete substances that can cause asthma to flair.

Animal Dander

Animal dander is the flaking in the skin, hair, or feathers of all warm-blooded pets including dogs, cats, birds, and rodents. Saliva and urine from these pets may also be allergens.

Tobacco smoke

Although people are usually not allergic to tobacco smoke, it is a strong irritant which can increase asthma symptoms.

Pollens and Molds

Seasonal allergies, such as hay fever or trees pollen, can trigger asthma. These trigger can also cause a runny nose or itchy eyes, which are signs of allergic rhinitis.

Other Allergens and Irritants

There are many other items that can trigger asthma symptoms: foods, bee stings, exposure to latex, very cold weather, moderate to strenuous exercise, or even a cold. If you are having an allergic reaction talk with your doctor about medicines and life style behaviors that can help you to avoid these episodes.

Controlling Asthma Allergens

If you know what you are allergic to, use these tips to get control over your environment:

Bedroom

- Place your mattress, box spring, and pillows in covers that resist mites. Avoid products made with feathers, such as pillows and comforters. Choose cotton fill instead.
- Wash bedding, clothes, and stuffed toys in hot water.
- Avoid sleeping on upholstered furniture, and decrease the amount of upholstery and carpet where you live, including the bedroom.

- Keep pets and items that can hold dust mites or dander, such as stuffed animals, out of the bedroom.
- Avoid products made with feathers, such as, pillows and comforters.

Living Areas

- When vacuuming, reduce the amount of dust by wearing a dust mask and/or using a product with a HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filter. If vacuuming does not reduce mites or dander, chemical cleaning agents can be used.
- If there is forced air heating in your home and you have a pet, close the air ducts in your bedroom.
- To keep indoor air clean, use an indoor air-cleaning system to remove allergens from the air. Mobile units with air filters or filter attachments can be added to your furnace to remove these allergens.
- Avoid molds indoors, by keeping bathrooms, kitchens and basements clean and well-ventilated. **Note:** If you find mold, use a cleaner, such as a fungicide, to kill mold spores. If you are concerned the cleaner may irritate your airways, have someone else do the cleaning for you.
- Avoid bringing allergens into the home by keeping doors and windows closed when pollen counts are high.
- Use a dehumidifier, since dust mites and mold do not survive well in low humidity. Keep humidity 30% or less and empty and clean the unit regularly.
- If you have pets, have someone who is not allergic to the pet to wash the animal weekly. Avoid visiting friends or relatives with pets. If you must visit, take preventive asthma medicine before the visit.
- Do not allow smoking where you live, have the person go outside, or help him or her find resources to stop using tobacco.
- Before moving into a house or apartment, clean the area well (or have it professionally cleaned) to reduce allergens.

Cleaning Supplies

The following can be safely used:

- Ammonia (use plain ammonia) or non-chlorine bleach
- Baking soda is a good room, rug or refrigerator deodorizer
- Club soda and baking soda as a spot remover
- Eco-friendly cleaners without chlorine bleach
- Furniture polish or beeswax
- Mineral, lemon, olive or linseed oils
- Salt loosens burned-on food and is a good kitchen cleanser
- Soaps used should be unscented or mild
- White or apple cider vinegar removes mold and mineral deposits

Medicines

Some people with asthma are sensitive to aspirin and other anti-inflammatory drugs. If you have asthma:

- **Avoid a class of drugs called beta-blockers.** They are often used for heart disease, blood pressure and glaucoma.
- **Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about which over the counter cold remedies to use or to avoid. Some medicines can trigger an asthma episode.**

☒ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**