



What Triggers My Asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease that affects millions of Americans, both young and old. There is no cure for asthma, but the good news is it can be managed and treated so you can live a normal, healthy life.

An asthma trigger can be a thing, activity or condition that makes your asthma worse. When you come in contact with a trigger it can cause an asthma **“attack, episode or flare-up.”**

The most common triggers are:

- An illness such as the flu, cold or sinus infection. The best way to prevent getting the flu is to get the flu vaccine each year. Your local pharmacy, drug store or physician’s office are a few of the places you can get your annual flu shot. Avoiding being around people who are sick and frequent hand washing also help prevent getting the flu or a cold.
- Acid reflux or pregnancy hormones can also trigger an asthma attack.
- Asthma can be triggered by food allergies or medications. Your doctor needs to know all of the medications that you take over the counter such as aspirin, anti-inflammatories, fever reducers or herbal therapies.
- Smoke is huge trigger for an asthma attack. This can be from a cigarette, a camp fire, a fireplace, etc.
- Exposure to some animals can be a trigger. The dander and saliva from pets

with fur or feathers can be an allergen and trigger an asthma attack. Try to keep your pets out of the bedroom and vacuum and damp dust at least weekly.

- Mold can also trigger asthma symptoms. Be sure to clean visible mold with mild soap, hot water and a strong brush. Throw away moldy items, run a dehumidifier and use the exhaust fan when taking a shower.
- Changes in the weather can be another trigger to watch for. Limit your time outdoors during high pollen times of the year such as spring and fall. Also, **extreme temperatures** (hot and cold) can trigger symptoms of asthma.
- Pests can also impact your asthma. To reduce your exposure, wash bedding regularly, fix leaks, store garbage outside, vacuum and dust weekly, and use allergen-proof pillow and mattress covers.
- Exercising can trigger an attack. Staying active is very important to your overall health and wellbeing, especially for those with asthma. If exercise causes asthma symptoms, use your quick-relief medicine 15–30 minutes before physical activity if prescribed. Remember to monitor the air quality if you plan to exercise outside.
- Another trigger can be strong odors. Scents from **perfumes, deodorants and cleaning supplies** can affect your

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asthma. When possible, choose cleaning and personal care products that are odor and fragrance-free.

- Stress and Strong Emotions- Every day comes with its ups and down emotionally. It's important to remember that **strong emotions** can increase rapid breathing and trigger asthma symptoms. **Stress**, both personal and work-related, can be a trigger.

Fall & Asthma

According to National Jewish Health, fall can be a challenging time of year for people with asthma and allergies. Weeds and molds are the two most common causes of fall allergies - especially ragweed. A lot of rain in the spring and early summer followed by sunny, hot days throughout the summer tends to produce more ragweed. Mold, on the other hand, is produced by rain and wet leaves. For these reasons, people who tend to suffer from allergies and asthma should take the following measures to try to cut down on their symptoms:

- Plan your outdoor activities earlier in the day since pollens are highest during mid day. If you happen to be outdoors on days with high pollen count, take a shower and change your clothes when you come inside.
- Keep your doors and windows closed during days of high pollen count. You can typically see what the pollen count will be either in the daily newspaper or on the TV news.

- Stay away from garden trash and wet leaves.
- Be sure and take your meds as prescribed by your doctor. Anti-histamines are more effective if taken before you are exposed to high levels of the allergens. Most allergy doctors recommend that antihistamines be taken at the start of allergy season and to continue taking them every day until the season is over. Some antihistamines can cause drowsiness, therefore you should be cautious if driving or operating machinery.

Tips for Fall Weather:

- Be prepared for weather changes by carrying a sweater, jacket and/or rain gear with you. Replace the filters in your home and have your furnace checked.
- And remember...it is time for those yearly flu shots.
- Most of all, remember to enjoy this beautiful season!!!

Resources:

"Asthma." *Www.lung.org*. N.p., Aug. 2012. Web.
<<http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/asthma/>>.

"Pediatric Asthma: Getting Ready for Fall." - *National Jewish Health*. N.p., June 2012. Web.
<<http://www.nationaljewish.org/healthinfo/pediatric/asthma/lifestyle-management/fall/>>.