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## How Can I Control Asthma Triggers

An important way to reduce the severity and frequency of your child's asthma attacks is to avoid allergens and irritants that cause your child to wheeze. Many of these triggers exist in your home. Follow these guidelines to reduce your child's exposure.

### **Get A Handle On Dust And Mold**

Keep your home clean and free of dust and mold, paying special attention to the bedroom.

- Arrange your child's furniture so it can be easily dusted. Store loose items in drawers, closets, or boxes.
- A bare wood or tile floor is preferable to carpeting. A thickly waxed hardwood floor, for example, can easily be wiped free of dust.
- Choose synthetic fibers for clothes, drapes, and rugs. Natural fibers are harder to keep dust-free.
- Washable blankets and comforters are easy to keep dust-free. Use a synthetic-filled mattress pad and pillows stuffed with synthetic fabric.
- Have your home vacuumed and bedrooms dusted frequently. Special vacuums cleaners may help prevent recirculation of dust. Cleaning fluids, in addition to dust and dirt, can aggravate asthma.
- Get rid of stuffed animals. Replace them with toys made of plastic, nylon, or polyester.
- If you have a forced-air heating system, a special filter may be useful. Or, close the ducts to your child's bedroom and use an electric heater instead.
- Before purchasing an expensive air conditioner or purifier, discuss its potential benefits with your pediatrician. If you already have an air conditioner, check regularly for mold growth, have the filter cleaned frequently, and spray the filter with an aerosol mold killer.
- Mold tends to accumulate in bathrooms, so have tiles and grout cleaned frequently. Moisture is likely to collect behind the toilet and under the sink; therefore, these areas should also be cleaned regularly.
- Check house plants and dried flowers regularly for mold growth. If your child has a severe mold allergy, hydroponic plants (plants grown in water instead of soil) may be better for your child.

### **Avoid Animal Dander**

- Try to find a new home for your hairy or feathered pet.
- If you just can not part with your pet, keep it in the garage or yard or on the porch.
- At the very least, keep it out of the rooms where your child spends the most time.
- Do not expect immediate relief for your child.

- Often, it takes weeks, or even months, for animal dander to disappear once you have removed a pet from your home.

### **Avoid Indoor Pollutants**

- Stay away from tobacco fumes, which irritate your airways.
- Do not smoke, and be assertive to others.
- Insist that smokers put out their cigarettes when they are near your child.
- Avoid strong perfumes, hair spray, and paint fumes, which can all aggravate asthma.

### **Beware Of Pollen And Outdoor Pollution**

- During the pollen season (spring, summer, or early fall, depending on which pollens affect you), keep your child away from woods and fields, where pollen concentration is highest.
- If your child is allergic to ragweed, do not bring related plants, such as chrysanthemums, dahlias, and daisies, into your home or workplace.
- On hot, sunny, windy days, when pollen concentration is high, your child may be most comfortable in an air-conditioned room.
- When air pollution reaches high concentrations, your child's asthma may get worse.
- Keep your child indoors on days of high levels of particulates, carbon monoxide, ozone, and other air pollutants.

### **Watch Out For Certain Foods And Drugs**

Some persons are sensitive to chemicals called sulfites, which are added to many foods and some medications as preservatives. The Food and Drug Administration recommends that restaurants and grocery stores warn consumers when products contain sulfites.

Foods that may contain sulfites:

- Lettuce
- Pre-cut fruit
- White grapes
- Maraschino cherries
- Fresh mushrooms
- Wet-milled corn
- Dehydrated potatoes
- Guacamole
- Shrimp
- Conditioned dough
- Beet sugar
- Wine and beer

Monosodium glutamate, or MSG, the flavor enhancer often found in Chinese food, also aggravates asthma in some children.

If your child is aspirin-sensitive, aspirin, and other painkillers like it, will worsen your child's asthma. Check the labels on over-the-counter drugs to see whether products you are considering buying contain aspirin.

Other painkillers that aggravate asthma include ibuprofen, indomethacin, and naproxen.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be taken without problems.

### **Consider These Other Precautions**

Any illness, especially infections of the throat, sinuses, and lungs, can worsen asthma.

If your child's asthma is triggered by exercise, ask your pediatrician about using an albuterol or Intal metered dose inhaler with a spacer 15 to 30 minutes before activity to prevent wheezing.

Remember, these tips are just suggestions. You do not need to change your child's lifestyle to an extreme degree to take care of his/her asthma.

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