Asthma Prevention

Cigarette smoke, house dust, molds, pollens, animal dander, certain insects, exercise, and even cold air are all triggers that can cause an asthma attack. Often, no specific triggers are identified.
Take the following measures around your house to reduce attacks:

- **Avoid cigarette and other smoke**. **No smoking should be allowed in a home where someone with asthma lives.** If smoking is allowed indoors, it should be done in a room with a closed door. A window should be opened to clear the air, afterward. If possible, do not use a wood-burning stove, kerosene heater, or fireplace. Minimize exposure to all sources of smoke, including incense, candles, fires, and fireworks.
- **Decrease pollen exposure.** Keep your windows shut and use central air during the pollen allergy season. Stay indoors with windows closed from late morning to afternoon, if you can. Avoid mowing the lawn if you have grass pollen allergy. Change your clothes and shower after being outside during this time of year.
- **Remove molds from bathrooms and wet areas.** Do this by cleaning the floors with a fungicide or diluted bleach. Avoid using humidifiers, vaporizers, or swamp coolers. These can spread molds through the air. Fix leaky faucets, pipes, or other sources of water that have mold around them.
- **Decrease house dust exposure.** Do this by using bare floors, vacuuming frequently, and changing furnace and air cooler filters frequently. Avoid using feather, wool, or foam bedding. Use polyester pillows and plastic covers over your mattress. Wash bedding weekly in hot water (hotter than 130º F).
- **Try to get someone else to vacuum for you once or twice a week, if you can.** Stay out of rooms while they are being vacuumed and for a short while afterward. If you vacuum, use a dust mask (from a hardware store), a double-layered or microfilter vacuum cleaner bag, or a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter.
- **Avoid perfumes, talcum powder, hair spray, paints** and other strong odors and fumes.
- **Keep warm-blooded pets (cats, dogs, rodents, birds) outside the home** if they are triggers for asthma. If you can't keep the pet outdoors, keep the pet out of your bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times, and keep the door closed. Remove carpets and furniture covered with cloth from your home. If that is not possible, keep the pet away from fabric-covered furniture and carpets.
- **Eliminate cockroaches.** Keep food and garbage in closed containers. Never leave food out. Use poison baits, traps, powders, gels, or paste (for example, boric acid). If a spray is used to kill cockroaches, stay out of the room until the odor goes away.
- **Decrease indoor humidity** to less than 60%. Use an indoor air cleaning device.
- **Avoid sulfites in foods and beverages.** Do not drink beer or wine or eat dried fruit, processed potatoes, or shrimp if they cause asthma symptoms.
- **Avoid cold air.** Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf on cold or windy days.
- **Avoid aspirin.** This is the most common drug causing serious asthma attacks.
- **If exercise triggers your asthma,** ask your caregiver how you should prepare before exercising. (For example, ask if you could use your inhaler 10 minutes before exercising.)
- **Avoid close contact with people who have a cold or the flu** since your asthma symptoms may get worse if you catch the infection from them. Wash your hands thoroughly after touching items that may have been handled by others with a respiratory infection.
- **Get a flu shot every year** to protect against the flu virus, which often makes asthma worse for days to weeks. Also get a pneumonia shot once every five to 10 years.

Call your caregiver if you want further information about measures you can take to help prevent asthma attacks.

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