

ENVIRONMENTAL ASTHMA TRIGGERS

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Asthma is a long-term lung condition in which the airways become inflamed and narrow leading to difficulty breathing and wheezing. It often affects people with a family history of allergies. A variety of triggers have been identified such as pollens, molds, animal dander and saliva, cockroaches, dust mites, breathing cold, dry air, cigarette smoke, strong odors, paint fumes, and wood smoke. Signs and symptoms of asthma, which can be mild to severe, may include wheezing, shortness of breath, a persistent cough, chest tightness, a rapid pulse, sweating, flared nostrils, pursed lips, a need to sit upright, and a bluish discoloration of the lips and fingernails. With treatment, you can control symptoms successfully. You can prevent some asthma episodes by avoiding or minimizing exposure to known triggers.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS & PREVENTIVE MEASURES INCLUDE:

- **Pollen and Outdoor Mold:** Stay indoors and keep windows closed when pollen and mold-spore counts are highest. Use air conditioning.
- **Indoor Mold:** Moisture causes mold. Fix leaky faucets and pipes. Clean mold off surfaces with a cleaner that has bleach. Open a window or turn on the exhaust fan when you shower. Replace or wash moldy shower curtains. Reduce room humidity by using a dehumidifier.
- **Pets:** Some people are allergic to animal dander (flakes of skin) and saliva. Don't allow pets in your bedroom. If possible, keep pets outside. Vacuum often, using a vacuum cleaner with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Add HEPA filters to central air conditioning and heating to help remove dander from the air. Bathe your cat or dog weekly. Wash your hands and clean your clothes after contact with pets.
- **Cockroaches:** Many people with asthma are allergic to the dried droppings of roaches. Keep food and garbage in closed containers. Wash the kitchen floor and counters at least once a week. Use traps to eliminate roaches. If a spray is used to kill roaches, stay out of the room until the odor goes away.
- **Dust mites:** Dust and vacuum your home frequently using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter. Wash sheets, blankets, and stuffed toys each week in hot water. Keep stuffed toys off the bed. Encase your mattress and pillows in dustproof covers. Reduce room humidity by using a dehumidifier or air conditioner.
- **Weather:** If you are sensitive to cold weather, cover your nose and mouth with a scarf when outdoors to trap moisture and minimize the effect of the cold, dry air.
- **Tobacco Smoke:** Do not smoke! Ask people not to smoke around you or inside your home, car, or any enclosed spaces.
- **Strong Odors, Sprays, and Smoke:** If you have asthma, you may be very sensitive to strong odors, chemicals, or smoke in the air. Avoid strong odors and sprays such as perfume, hair spray, and paints. Avoid use of a woodstove, kerosene heater, or fireplace.

MEDICAL CARE & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

If you have any questions about asthma, please contact your osteopathic family physician. Asthma can be diagnosed with a thorough history and physical exam along with lung and blood tests. Management includes the right treatment plan and regular visits with your doctor. Your family doctor will help you choose which medications will work best for you. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

SOURCE(S): Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, Environmental Asthma Triggers. Gov, Medscape, & Up-To-Date.

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