

Living Healthy With Asthma

There are many things that can trigger an asthma attack. One trigger can cause an asthma attack. Many triggers together may cause your asthma to flare up! Asthma triggers can add up to an asthma attack. It's like an empty bucket. Each time you have contact with these triggers, you are adding to the bucket until the last trigger sets off an asthma attack.

The Asthma Trigger Bucket



1. You have asthma. Your airways are sensitive to triggers in the air. There is a chance a trigger is in your bucket all of the time.



2. When you breathe in a trigger that irritates your lungs, you may not notice it. For example, you don't use mattress or pillow encasings on your bed and are exposed to dust mites. This is a trigger for your asthma. Your bucket fills up a little more.



3. Maybe you are next to someone wearing strong perfume. It may not bother you, but it may effect your lungs and adds to the "asthma trigger bucket". It fills your bucket almost all the way.



4. Then you spend time outside on a windy day. This causes you to breathe in pollen. Your bucket overflows and you have an asthma attack.





All of these triggers added to the bucket can cause an asthma attack. It's important to get rid of as many triggers as possible.

Get Rid of Asthma Triggers!

Find out what sets off your asthma and get rid of it!





It's important to know which things trigger your asthma so you can get rid of them. Once you get rid of these triggers, you are less likely to have an asthma attack.

Here is a list of some asthma triggers and ways you can get rid of them:

TRIGGER	WHAT ARE THEY?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Smoke & Smoking 	Asthma can be triggered by smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe, or cigar and the smoke breathed in and out by a smoker. Even the smell of old smoke can trigger an asthma attack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not smoke. Attend classes to quit smoking.• Do not allow smoking in your home or car.• If you smoke and aren't ready to quit, smoke outside and change your shirt or jacket before going back inside.
Dust & Dust Mites 	Though dust mites are too small to be seen they are one of the main triggers for asthma. Dust mites live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric covered furniture, bedcovers, clothes, and stuffed toys and are in every home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vacuum weekly.• Wash bedding and stuffed toys in hot water (120°) every 1-2 weeks.• Cover mattresses and pillows in dust proof zippered covers(encasings).• Avoid feather pillows and down comforters.• Get rid of things that collect dust.• Remove carpet if possible. Wet the carpet before removing.• Wet mop floors at least weekly.
Pests 	Droppings or body parts of pests such as cockroaches or mice can be asthma triggers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not leave food or garbage out. Store food in airtight containers.• Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids right away.• Vacuum up cockroach bodies and fill in holes in the walls or floor with copper wool.• Fix leaky plumbing/roof or other sources of water.• Try using poison baits, such as roach stations for cockroaches, or traps for rodents. Place baits away from children, Avoid using pesticide sprays. <p>If sprays are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit the spray to infested area.• Make sure there is plenty of fresh air when you spray.
Mold 	Molds grow on damp materials. The key to mold control is moisture control. If mold is a problem in your home, clean up the mold and get rid of water or moisture that causes it to grow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a fan or open a window when showering or cooking.• Clean mold off hard surfaces with water and detergent and dry completely.• Fix leaky plumbing or other sources of water.

Asthma Triggers

Here is a list of more asthma triggers and ways you can get rid of them:

TRIGGER	WHAT ARE THEY?	WHAT CAN YOU DO?
Animals & Pets 	Your pet's skin, hair, urine, and saliva can be asthma triggers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider keeping pets outdoor or even finding a new home for your pets.• Keep pets out of your bedroom and other sleeping areas at all times, and keep the door closed.• Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys.• Bathe pets weekly.• Wash your hands after petting animals.
Odors/Sprays 	Odors can trigger an asthma attack when a person breathes in the particles in the air.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't use perfume, talcum powder, incense, spray deodorant, hairspray or other strong scents.• Do not use stove/oven for heating house.• When cleaning, don't use strong smelling cleansers, including bleach.• Avoid places with strong smells like nail and hair salons. When making an appointment ask when these fumes are the strongest. Wear a mask. Remember to bring your asthma medications.
Incense 	Burning incense smoke that may trigger asthma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid burning incense.• Confine the incense to a specific room and do not spend a lot of time in that space.• Keep the windows open while burning incense.
Pollen & Allergies 	Plants send tiny dust-like spores into the air which can cause an asthma attack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not play or do activities in leaves or on freshly cut grass.• Keep windows closed when the pollen count is high.• Try to stay inside during days with high pollen counts.• If you are not sure what causes your allergies, go to your doctor to get tested.

There are other triggers that may cause an asthma attack. These are colds, weather changes, flu, exercise, cold air, outbursts of emotion, certain medications, rhinitis and sinusitis, heartburn, hormones, and certain foods.

Need help? Have questions?

Asthma Education/Support in Alameda County

NAME OF RESOURCE	SERVICES PROVIDED	CONTACT
Adult Asthma Support Group	Free to the public on the second Tuesday of each month, 7–8:30 pm at Alta Bates Hospital, 2450 Ashby, Berkeley.	Call 510-204-1586 for information.
Asthma Start	Provides free education and case management for children under the age of 5 who have asthma.	Call 510-383-5181
Health Insurance Plans	Many health plans want to help their members with asthma control.	Call the Member Services Dept. of your health insurance plan.
Kid's Night— Hill Physician's Group	Free program for families of children 5–12 years in various parts of the county.	Call 1-877-493-5563
Oakland Unified School District	Asthma management education for students and staff; individual assistance for students with asthma	Joan Edelstein, RN, School Nurse Asthma Specialist 510-879-2929, KickAsthma@earthlink.net
West Oakland Asthma Coalition	Free asthma information and support.	Call 510-763-1880 ask for Valerie

Other Asthma Resources

NAME OF RESOURCE	SERVICES PROVIDED	CONTACT
Allergy and Asthma Network— Mothers of Asthmatics	Asthma information.	Call 1-800-878-4403 or visit http://www.aanma.org
American Lung Association	Asthma information, programs and training.	Call 1-800-LUNG USA (586-4872) or visit www.lungusa.org
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America	Asthma information.	Call 1-800-7-ASTHMA (727-8462) or visit http://www.aafa.org
RAMP (Regional Asthma Management and Prevention Initiative)	Asthma Information and resources.	Visit http://www.rampasthma.org

Help with Housing Problems

NAME OF RESOURCE	SERVICES PROVIDED	CONTACT
Housing Rights, Inc.	Works on discrimination in housing, fair housing services, tenant and landlord conflict resolution.	Call 510-548-8776 or visit www.housingrights.org
Sentinel Fair Housing	Works on discrimination in housing, fair housing services, tenant and landlord conflict resolution.	Call 510-836-2687 or visit www.sentinelairhousing.org

State Health Insurance Programs

NAME OF RESOURCE	SERVICES PROVIDED	CONTACT
Healthy Families	For children of low income families. Child must be under the age of 19 years.	Call 1-800-880-5305
Medi-Cal	For low income, California legal residents.	Call 510-777-2300 or 1-800-698-1118