



## Asthma Trigger Control Plan

Because you have asthma, your airways are very sensitive. They may react to things called triggers (stimuli that can cause asthma episodes). Your airways may become swollen, tighten up, and produce excess mucus in the presence of one or more of the triggers below. These triggers may make asthma symptoms worse or keep you from getting better. It's important to find out what your asthma triggers are. Learn ways to avoid them. If you cannot avoid triggers, and your medicine plan does not work as well as you and your doctor think it should, you both should discuss allergy shots (immunotherapy).

- Ask your doctor to help you find out what your triggers are.
- Ask your doctor for help in deciding which actions will help the most to reduce your asthma symptoms.
- Number each action item in order of importance. Carry out these actions first. Once you have completed these actions, move on to actions that are of lesser importance.
- Discuss the results of these efforts with your doctor.

### **Pollens and Molds (Outdoor)**

- Stay indoors during the midday and afternoon when the pollen count is high.
- Use air conditioning, if possible.
- Keep windows closed during seasons when pollen and mold are highest.
- Avoid sources of molds (wet leaves, garden debris).

### **House Dust Mites**

**These are actions you should take to gain control of dust mites:**

- Encase your mattress and box spring in an airtight cover.
- Either encase your pillow or wash it once a week every week.
- Avoid sleeping or lying on upholstered furniture.
- Remove carpets that are laid on concrete.
- Wash your bed covers, clothes, and stuffed toys once a week in hot (130<sup>o</sup>) water.



**These actions will also help you gain control of dust mites – but they are not essential:**

- Reduce indoor humidity to less than 50 percent. Use a dehumidifier if needed.
- Remove carpets from your bedroom.
- Use chemical agents to kill mites or to change mite antigens in the house.
- Avoid using a vacuum or being in a room while it is being vacuumed.
- If you must vacuum, one or more of the following things can be done to reduce the amount of dust you breathe in.
  - Use a dust mask.
  - Use a central vacuum cleaner with the collecting bag outside the home.
  - Use a vacuum cleaner that has powerful suction.

**Animal Dander (or flakes – from the skin, hair, or feathers of all warm-blooded pets including dogs, cats, birds, and rodents). There is no such thing as an allergen-free dog. The length of a pet’s hair does not matter. The allergen is in the saliva, urine, and dander.**

- Remove the animal from the house or school classroom.
- If you must have a pet, keep the pet out of your bedroom at all times.
- If there is forced-air heating in the home with a pet, close the air ducts in your bedroom.
- Wash the pet weekly.
- Avoid visits to friends or relatives with pets.
- Take asthma medicine (cromolyn or beta2-agonists; cromolyn is often preferred) before visiting homes or sites where animals are present.
- Choose a pet without fur or feathers (such as a fish).
- Avoid products made with feathers, for example, pillows and comforters. Also avoid pillows, bedding, and furniture stuffed with kapok (silky fibers from the seed pods of the silk-cotton tree).
- Use a vacuum cleaner fitted with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter.

**Cockroach Allergen**

- Use insect sprays; but have someone else spray when you are outside of the home.

- Air out the home for a few hours after spraying.
- Use roach traps.

### **Indoor Molds**

- Keep bathrooms, kitchens, and basements well aired.
- Clean bathrooms, kitchens, and basements regularly.
- Do not use humidifiers.
- Use dehumidifiers for damp basement areas, with humidity level set for less than 50 percent but above 25 percent. Empty and clean unit regularly.

### **Tobacco Smoke**

- Do not smoke.
- Do not allow smoking in the home.
- Have household members smoke outside.
- Do not allow any smoking in your bedroom. Encourage family members to quit smoking. Their doctor can help them quit.
- Use an indoor air-cleaning device (for smoke, mold, and dander).

### **Wood Smoke**

- Avoid using a wood burning heat stove to heat your home. The smoke increases lower respiratory symptoms.
- Avoid using kerosene heaters.



### **Strong Odors and Sprays**

- Do not stay in your home when it is being painted. Allow enough time for the paint to dry.
- Avoid perfume and perfumed cosmetics such as talcum powder and hair spray.
- Do not use room deodorizers.

- ❑ Use nonperfumed household cleaning products whenever possible.
- ❑ Reduce strong cooking odors (especially frying) by using a fan and opening windows.
- ❑ Avoid air pollution by staying indoors on days when the pollution count is high.

### **Colds and Infections**

- ❑ Avoid people with colds or the flu.
- ❑ Get rest, eat a balanced diet, and exercise regularly.
- ❑ Talk to your doctor about flu shots.
- ❑ Do not take over-the-counter cold remedies, such as antihistamines and cough syrup, unless you speak to your doctor first.

### **Exercise**

- ❑ Work out a medicine plan with your doctor that allows you to exercise without symptoms.
- ❑ Take inhaled beta2-agonist or cromolyn medicine before exercising.
- ❑ Warm up before doing exercise and cool down afterwards.

### **Weather**

- ❑ Wear a scarf over your mouth and nose in cold weather.
- ❑ Pull a turtleneck over your nose on windy or cold days.
- ❑ Dress warmly in the winter or on windy days.

**Remember: Making these changes will help keep asthma episodes from starting. An asthma trigger control plan is an important part of controlling asthma.**