Helpful Tips

- No smoking in the house!
- Target the bedroom first with dust and dustmite control
- Keep humidity levels below 50%
- Change filters on your central air system every 3 months or according to manufacturer’s instructions
- Vacuum weekly with a HEPA-filtered vacuum or bags
- Use exhaust fans in the bathroom and kitchen, vented outside
- Fight roaches and rodents by cleaning up moisture sources and crumbs
- Vent gas stoves and appliances outside
- Fix leaky pipes and windows
- Vent dryers outside; clean lint after each use
- Keep windows closed on days with high levels of pollen, mold or pollution
- Minimize use of wood-burning stoves and fireplaces

Steps to Asthma Control

1. Work closely with your health care team to understand, manage and prevent symptoms; keep all routine asthma visits.
2. Take all medicines as prescribed; know their names, when, how and why to use them.
3. Learn what things set off your asthma symptoms; avoid them as much as possible.
4. Treat asthma symptoms as soon as they appear, following your Asthma Action Plan.

Who We Are

Allergy & Asthma Network is the leading nonprofit patient outreach, education and advocacy organization for people with asthma, allergies and related conditions. Our patient-centered network unites individuals, families, health care professionals, industry and government decision makers to improve health and quality of life for millions of people affected by the conditions.

An innovator in encouraging family participation in treatment plans, Allergy & Asthma Network specializes in making accurate medical information relevant and understandable to all while promoting standards of care that are proven to work. We believe that integrating prevention with treatment helps reduce emergency health care visits, keep children in school and adults at work, and allow participation in sports and other activities of daily life.

Our Mission

To end unnecessary death and suffering due to asthma, allergies and related conditions through outreach, education, advocacy and research.

Allergy & Asthma Network is a 501(c)(3) organization.

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See our other brochures
Asthma is an ongoing lung disease that causes episodes of coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath. Like all chronic illnesses, asthma cannot be cured, but you can prevent and ease symptoms. The key to asthma control is to stay away from the things that irritate your lungs. Most of these things are in the air we breathe.

Indoor allergens and irritants can cause itchy, watery eyes; sneezy, runny nose; sinus and ear congestion; headache; or fatigue. For people with asthma, they can spark coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing – and lead to a full-blown asthma attack.

People spend nearly 90 percent of their time indoors. Removing allergens, irritants and contaminants from the air inside your home will reduce your allergy and asthma symptoms, along with your need for medication or emergency treatment.

No more sleepless nights; no more missed school and work days – better breathing for you and your family!

Indoor air allergens and irritants found in homes:

**Secondhand smoke**
Secondhand smoke is dangerous. For people with asthma, especially young children, it can set off symptoms and cause long-term lung damage.

**Solution:**
- Make your home a smoke-free zone
- Ask outdoor smokers to stay away from windows and doors

**Dust mites**
These tiny insects live in mattresses, pillows, upholstered furniture and carpets. They feed off shed human skin wherever there is moisture to survive. Allergens from their dead bodies and waste collect in bedding, furnishings and dust then irritate airways and eyes on contact.

**Solution:**
- Keep indoor humidity below 50%
- Cover pillows, mattresses and box springs with dust-mite-proof encasings
- Wash bed linens and stuffed toys weekly with hot water
- Keep dust down with easy-to-wash floor and window coverings and HEPA-filtered vacuum

**Pets**
Cats, dogs and other furry or feathered animals shed animal dander – tiny particles of protein from skin, saliva and waste that settle in carpets and dust. When disturbed, these allergens fly into the air and irritate eyes and lungs of sensitive people. No breed is truly “allergen free.”

**Solution:**
- Keep pets out of bedrooms and off furniture
- Keep pets outside as much as possible; bathe them often

**Mold**
Mold grows in damp areas, both indoors and out, sending tiny spores flying through the air and into lungs. Some molds are toxic.

**Solution:**
- Clean up visible mold with nontoxic mix of 1 T baking soda, 2 T white vinegar and 1 qt water
- Fix leaky pipes and windows
- Keep indoor humidity below 50%
- Run exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms, vented outside

**Cockroaches and rodents**
Allergens from insects and rodents settle in house dust, upholstery and bedding, where they are easily inhaled. These pests need water and food to survive.

**Solution:**
- Fix leaky pipes, clean crumbs and food spills, and keep food in sealed containers
- Eliminate stacks of grocery bags and newspapers
- Seal holes along walls and under sinks.
- Use child-proof poison baits, boric acid or traps, rather than pesticide sprays
- Vacuum regularly with a HEPA-filtered vacuum

**Chemicals and strong odors**
Chemicals from cleaning products, air fresheners, gas-burning appliances, scented candles and paints, as well as new carpets and furnishings, are strong lung irritants.

**Solution:**
- Use no- or low-odor household cleaners
- Skip the scented air fresheners and candles
- Vent gas appliances to the outside
- Choose furnishings with low or no emissions and air them out before installation

**Germs and bacteria**
Respiratory viruses and bacterial infections set off asthma symptoms in people of all ages.

**Solution:**
- Practice good hygiene: wash your hands frequently. Teach children to wash their hands and keep them out of their mouths and eyes; don’t allow family members to share dishes or food
- Keep surfaces clean and disinfected
- Keep people ill with colds or flu away from other family members

**Air Cleaners:**
If possible, room or whole house filters must be part of a comprehensive plan including dust removal and allergen prevention. Choose one with a HEPA filter and change filters as recommended; be sure it’s large enough to clean your chosen room. Never use filters that produce ozone, a known lung irritant.