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.

This brochure was developed with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-X. TUE1EH000785-04. Its content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the official views of the CDC.

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See our other brochures

Breathe Better at Work
Indoor air quality basics

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.

Helpful Tips

- Increase air circulation to improve temperature and humidity control and dilute levels of harmful chemicals from office machines or furnishings
- Ensure that outdoor air supply dampers and room air vents are open
- Remove or modify partitions or obstructions that block fresh air flow
- Use room fans to improve circulation
- Keep humidity below 50%
- During periods of construction and renovation; be sure dust and debris is contained within the construction area
- Enforce no-smoking no animal policies
- Consider a desk-top air cleaner; choose one with a HEPA filter that does not emit ozone (contact the manufacturer to be sure)
- Encourage workers with colds, flu or other contagious illnesses to stay home until healthy
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.

Airborne 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.

At least one out of every 4 adults with asthma experiences symptoms set off by conditions at work. This includes those whose asthma is caused by the work environment, as well as those whose pre-existing asthma is aggravated by allergens or irritants in the workplace.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) says more than half (52%) of reported indoor air problems in offices is caused by inadequate ventilation; another 16% comes from specific allergens and irritants inside the building.

Removing allergens, irritants and contaminants from the air inside the workplace will reduce your allergy and asthma symptoms, along with your need for medication or emergency treatment.

Common allergens and irritants found in the workplace:

**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:**
- Enforce a smoke-free policy
- Ask outdoor smokers to stay away from windows and doors

**Dust mites**
These tiny insects live in upholstered furniture and carpets and are almost impossible to get rid of. They feed off shed human skin wherever there is moisture to survive. Allergens from their dead bodies and waste irritate airways and eyes on contact.

**Solution:**
- Keep humidity levels inside your office below 50%
- Eliminate dusty/musty stacks of books and papers

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

**Solution:**
- Search out and fix leaks under sinks and windows, in kitchens and bathrooms, near water fountains
- Improve circulation in closed storage areas
- Minimize or carefully maintain potted plants
- Keep indoor humidity below 50%

**Cockroaches and rodents**
Allergens from insects and rodents settle in dust and carpets, where they are easily inhaled when disturbed. These pests are attracted by food and water.

**Solution:**
- Fix leaky pipes
- Clean crumbs and food spills; keep food in sealed containers
- Clean counters and refrigerators from spills and food
- Eliminate stacks of paper and books

**Pets**
Cats, dogs and other furry animals shed animal dander – tiny particles of protein from skin, saliva and waste – that collects in carpets and dust. When disturbed, these allergens fly into the air and lungs, sparking allergies and asthma. No breed is truly “allergen free.”

**Solution:**
- Do not allow pets in the workplace

**Chemicals and strong odors**
Chemicals from office machines, cleaning products, air fresheners, paints and perfumes as well as new carpets and furnishings, are strong lung irritants.

**Solution:**
- Use no- or low-odor cleaners
- Do not use scented air fresheners
- Establish a no-perfume policy
- Air out new carpeting and furnishings before opening renovated areas
- Ensure good air circulation around copiers and other office machines

**Germs and bacteria**
Respiratory viruses and bacterial infections set off asthma symptoms

**Solution:**
- Practice good hygiene: wash hands frequently. Keep desks, counters, kitchen and bathroom surfaces clean
- Promote telecommuting so people with colds or flu can stay home until healthy

**Know your rights**
- If you think your workplace is making you sick:
  - Let your supervisor and building management know there might be a problem. Document the conversations
  - Track if symptoms get worse at work and talk to your doctor
  - Contact OSHA (800-321-OSHA) to request an on-site inspection; you can ask to remain anonymous
  - Check out the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Health Hazards Evaluation program that helps find sources of workplace health problems: www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/