

7 Steps to Reduce

Asthma Triggers In Your Home

Asthma can be triggered by allergens, irritants, and aggravators that are common in homes. These 7 steps can help you keep your home free of these asthma triggers and help you better control your asthma or your child's asthma.

Step 1: *Keep it dry*

Mold and mold spores are major asthma triggers. They can grow on damp or wet surfaces. These are often found in kitchens, bathrooms, and basements. The key to mold control is moisture control.

- Turn on the bathroom fan or open a window during and/or after showers or baths
- Turn on the kitchen fan or open a window when washing dishes
- Close the windows during heavy rain
- Use a clean dehumidifier, air conditioner, or both in living spaces to keep humidity between 35% and 50%
- Use a clean dehumidifier in the basement to keep humidity between 35% and 50%
- Wash and dry hard surfaces to prevent mold growth

Step 2: *Keep it clean*

- Remove shoes and/or wipe feet on a doormat before coming inside
- Keep dining tables and kitchen counters free of crumbs and spills
- Wash dishes and counter tops right away after eating or preparing food
- Clean bathrooms and kitchens at least once every week
- Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof zippered covers (in the store, look for a cover that is “allergen-impermeable”)
- Change bed sheets every week, wash them in hot water and dry them completely
- Wash all other bedding in hot water and dry it completely at least once per month
- Keep stuffed toys off of children's beds
- Wash stuffed animals in hot water, dry them completely, and then freeze them to kill dust mites
- Keep pets out of bedrooms and outdoors as often as possible (pets such as dogs, cats, hamsters, and birds can be asthma triggers)
- Bathe pets weekly and clean pet bedding and litter every week
- Dust furniture every week
- Vacuum carpets and fabric-covered furniture weekly (in the store, look for a vacuum that says “HEPA filter,” “allergen control,” or “low emission.”)
- Vacuum and wet mop floors weekly
- Clean basements, attics, garages, under large appliances and inside cabinets and drawers at least once a year
- Donate, recycle, or throw away things you don't use

For more information, contact the HEALTH Information Line at 401-222-5960 / RI Relay 711 or visit www.health.ri.gov



Step 3: Keep it pest free

Pests such as cockroaches and rodents (and their droppings) can make someone's asthma worse. They are often found in kitchens, bathrooms, and basements. These are the places where they find food and water.

- Clean up food as soon as possible after cooking and eating
- Keep food in closed containers in the kitchen
- Store all trash in garbage cans with lids
- Rinse recyclables before putting them in a bin
- Avoid saving boxes, paper bags, or newspapers in piles
- Place traps for pests near walls, under sinks, and in cabinets
- Check and replace traps for pests
- Avoid using pesticide spray or fogging
- Use pesticide gel or boric acid for cockroaches and poison baits or sticky traps for rodents
- If you have a serious pest problem, consider hiring a professional exterminator

Step 4: Keep it safe

- If your child has asthma, have an Asthma Action Plan (this is a treatment plan you develop with the doctor)
- Know your asthma triggers (or your child's asthma triggers)
- Avoid your asthma triggers whenever possible (or teach your child to avoid her or his asthma triggers)
- Consider finding a new home for your pet(s) if you or your child is allergic
- Listen to the weather report and stay indoors (or keep your child indoors) when ozone levels are high
- Close windows and use air conditioning on ozone action days
- Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf when outside on very cold days, or teach your child to do so
- Wash your hands frequently and use antibacterial gels, or teach your child to do so

Step 5: Keep the air moving

- All fuel-burning appliances (stoves, water heaters, and furnaces, for example) should be vented properly
- Open windows (in warmer weather)
- Use fans in bedrooms and living rooms
- Open windows and doors while you clean
- Clean and dust heating and air conditioning vents regularly
- Try to not use fragrances, air fresheners, scented candles, and other household products with strong odors

Step 6: Keep it poison free

- If you smoke, quit smoking
- Don't allow smoking in your home or your car
- Don't use toxic cleaners or other toxic household products

Step 7: Keep it maintained

- Put trash outside on garbage day
- Check for signs of pests
- Rake leaves, dirt, and dust away from your house and bag it for garbage pickup