



# Removing Asthma Triggers from the Home



Here is a list of ways to help free your home of triggers. Even a few changes are better than none to help someone with asthma.

## Dust Mites

### Good:

- Wash all bedding (sheets, blankets, comforters, pillows) once a week in HOT water (at least 130°F)
- Cover all mattresses and pillows with bed encasings (Available from the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, St. Louis, Target, Walmart, etc.)
- Do not use feather pillows and comforters
- Store clean clothing and bedding in a dry place (for example in a dresser, plastic containers, etc)
- Vacuum carpeting weekly with a vacuum that has a HEPA filter
- Choose washable toys made of rubber, plastic, metal, or wood instead of stuffed animals
- Place stuffed animals in Ziploc bags and place them in the freezer for 24 hours (Best for texture -
  - o sensitive kids) OR Wash stuffed animals in HOT water (at least 130°F)
- Look for products with the Asthma and Allergy Friendly stamp
- Keep the house well ventilated/aired out
- Dust off room or ceiling fans before using them
- Clean all hard surfaces with a clean, wet rag
- Do not allow the asthmatic person to lie on the carpet



### Best:

- Replace air conditioner filter every 1 to 3 months
- Clean appliances including heat exchangers, dryer filters, coils on the refrigerator, furnaces, and ducts
- Avoid using room and ceiling fans
- Keep the humidity level below 50%
- Avoid furniture covered with material. Vinyl, wooden, metal, or leather furniture is good because they do not collect dust mites
- Remove carpeting, especially from the bedroom

## Outdoor Mold

### Good:

- Do not allow asthmatic to play in wet leaves
- Do not put mulch close to the house
- Do not allow asthmatics to play in mulched playgrounds, especially right after it rains
- Rake leaves away from the house



### Best:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Remove visible outdoor mold growth
- \_\_\_\_\_ Direct rain gutters away from the house
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clean mold from cracks in the foundation



## Indoor Mold



### **Good:**

- Look in the bathrooms, kitchen (including refrigerator pans), laundry room, attic, crawl spaces, and basement for leaks, dampness, and excess water
  - Keep the bathroom, kitchen, and laundry room well ventilated/ aired out
- Look for brownish/yellowish/blackish spots in the bathrooms, kitchen, laundry room, attic, crawl spaces, and basement
  - Clean all surfaces that may have mold on them (1/4 cup of bleach + 1 gallon of water OR hydrogen peroxide)
- Check windowsills and panes, garbage pails, houseplant soil, wallpaper, carpets, rugs, firewood, and old books for mold or mildew
- Dry off the shower walls and bathroom floor after bathing
  - Weekly, clean and dry shower stalls, shower curtains, bath mats, soap dishes, tubs, bathroom fans, tiles, toilets, kitchen and bathroom sinks, plumbing fixtures, floors and walls
- Empty garbage and recycling cans daily
  - Throw out stale food
  - Clean garbage and recycling cans weekly
- Air out closets
- Dry out wet shoes
  - Never place damp or wet clothes in a laundry hamper
- Check for bubbling paint or wall paper
- Do not have fish tanks
- Get rid of plants that are inside
- Contact Legal Services of Eastern Missouri to help with reporting large mold problems to the landlord

### **Legal Services of Eastern Missouri**

4232 Forest Park Avenue  
St. Louis, Missouri 63108  
Phone: (314) 534-4200  
Phone: (800) 444-0514  
<http://www.lsem.org/>

### **Best:**

- Wash and grout bathroom tiles
- Waterproof cement floors
- Keep the humidity below 50%
- In rooms that become damp, use a paint with additives that block mold formation
- Dry clean carpets instead of steam cleaning them
- Get rid of any carpeting in the bathrooms, bedrooms, and carpeting on cement slab floors

## Cold Air

- Wear a scarf to loosely cover mouth and nose to warm up the air before it enters the lungs



## Cockroaches

### Good:

- Keep food in one or two areas of the house only
  - Clean up right after making food
  - Wash and dry dirty dishes right after meals
  - Keep your kitchen clean and free of leftover food or food pieces on the counters and floors
- Do not leave pet food out overnight
  - Keep pet food covered in airtight plastic containers
- Keep lids on the garbage and recycling containers
  - Do not let newspapers, paper grocery bags, and cardboard boxes collect in the house
- Use roach traps and boric acid in places where there are cockroaches instead of using pesticide sprays
  - If you still cannot get rid of cockroaches, call an exterminator to get rid of cockroaches when the asthmatic is not present



### Best:

- Fix cracks and holes in the foundation, plumbing, walls, and windows
- Fix leaky faucets and pipes
- Wrap pipes with insulation if moisture forms on the pipes

## Animal Dander

### Good:

- Keep pets out of the bedroom
  - Do not allow pets to sleep in the asthmatic's bed
- Keep pets off of carpeting and upholstered furniture
- Wash your pet about once a week (soap isn't necessary every time)
  - Brush the pet weekly while the asthmatic is not around



### Best:

- Do not have pets with fur or feathers (dogs, cats, birds, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc.)
- Keep pets outside as much as possible
- Replace carpets with hardwood or linoleum floors
- Use a HEPA air filter. Clean the filters regularly

## Strong Odors

### Good:

- Open the windows and turn on fans to ventilate fumes
- Use non-spray air fresheners
  - Use solid air fresheners
- Use cleaning wipes instead of cleaning sprays
  - Use natural cleaning products
  - Use baking soda + water **OR** vinegar + water as a household cleaner
- Clean when the asthmatic is not home and ventilate/air out the area well
- Burn only firewood in fireplaces, no charcoal
  - Make sure the damper is open and that the chimney is cleaned regularly when using a fireplace





- Use the following only in well ventilated/aired out areas: cleaners, paints, adhesives, pesticides, cosmetics, air fresheners

**Best:**

- Put in exhaust fans in the kitchen, bathroom, and any work area
- Check the pilot light on gas stoves and make sure that gas flames are burning blue
- Get someone to inspect the gas water heater regularly

## Pollen

**Good:**

- Towel off pets when they come inside, because their fur collects pollen and mold
- Check pollen counts daily
- AAFA-STL Facebook/Twitter
- St. Louis County Department of Health - [http://www.co.st-louis.mo.us/doh/pollen/st. Louis County Department of Health](http://www.co.st-louis.mo.us/doh/pollen/st.LouisCountyDepartmentofHealth)
- Do not play outside when pollen count is high/red zone
- Clean all surfaces with a yellowish powder on it with a wet rag



**Best:**

- Keep the windows closed and use air conditioning on days when pollen is high (usually morning and midday)
- Change air conditioning filters every 3 to 6 months
- Change furnace filters every 3 to 6 months

## Smoke (Cigarettes, Cigar, Marijuana, Wood Burning, Pipe, Incense, etc. )

**Good:**

- Smoke outside of the home and outside of the car
- Do not smoke near kids

**Best:**

- If possible, quit smoking  
Missouri Quit Line  
**1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**  
<http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/lifedependsonit/quitline.php>
- Change clothing after smoking, (The chemicals stuck in clothing, curtains, etc. can cause an asthma episode)



## Exercise

- Talk to a doctor about using a relief inhaler (albuterol) before beginning exercise
- Warm up with light exercise, such as walking, for at least 5 to 10 minutes
- Drink plenty of water when exercising
- Stop and follow an asthma action plan if symptoms start
- Cool down after workout for at least 5 minutes. Move at a slower pace. Then finish by stretching

