Asthma Triggers

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Objectives

- What is a trigger?
- Common asthma triggers
  - Exercise
  - Weather change
  - Allergens
  - Irritants
  - Stress
- Managing triggers
What is a “trigger”?

- A “trigger” is something that produces a response from your body.
- In the case of **asthma**, your body sees a trigger as a threat and releases chemicals to fight off the trigger.
- If not treated right away, this may lead to an **asthma attack**.
Common Asthma Triggers

- Smoke
- Strong emotions
- Furry pets
- Colds
- Exercise
- Changes in the weather
- Pollen
- Cockroaches
- Cold weather
- Mold & mildew
- Food allergies
- Strong smells
Exercise

Did you know that exercise can produce a bronchoconstriction in the airways? (Exercise-Induced Bronchoconstriction or EIB)

As many as 90% of people who have asthma are triggered by exercise

**TAKING ALBUTEROL** 15-20 minutes prior to exercise may be helpful to lower the risk of an exercise related asthma attack
Any change of weather can trigger your child's asthma

In the cold:
- It is important not to breathe in the cold air directly, this may trigger an asthma attack
- This picture shows a round band that can be best for kids to pull up and down to shield them from the cold
Weather Change: Heat

- If you have trouble with the heat:
  - Stay indoors on very hot days and use an air conditioner or fan (do not open windows)
Allergens: Indoor

- **Pets**: should never be allowed in any room that the child is sleeping in

- **Dust Mites**
  - Clean when your child is **not** in the room
  - Remove wall to wall carpets from the home
  - Cover the beds with special dust mite covers (all beds the child sleeps in)
  - Always keep dust mite cover on and clean the bed sheets in hot water once a week

- *NYC’s Healthy Homes program* can help with some of the following issues that make asthma worse:
  - Mold and mildew
  - Cockroaches, mice, and other pests

* https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/healthy-home.page
NYC: Healthy Homes Program

- The Healthy Homes Program can answer questions about keeping homes healthy and safe *

- For more information, call **646-632-6023**
  Leave a message and they will call you back *

* [https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/healthy-home.page](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/healthy-home.page)
Allergens: Outdoor

- **Springtime**: trees and grass
- **Fall**: ragweed and mold

**Tips for managing outdoor allergens:**
- Pay attention as the weather begins to change - remember to check the **pollen count** in your area before you go outside
- Wash face and hands regularly when outdoors
- Shower when you come indoors
- Sleep with bedroom windows closed
- Talk to your doctor about allergy medications
Pollen triggers an immune response

Antibodies bind to pollen

Histamine drives the inflammation and swelling that leads to hay fever symptoms

Activated mast cells release histamine

Antibodies bound to pollen, attach to mast cells
Irritants

- Car fumes
- Cigarette smoking or vaping
- Cleaning products and other strong-smelling products
Stress and anxiety are triggers that can lead to an asthma attack.

During an asthma attack, wheezing and difficulty breathing can cause stress and anxiety.

It is important to talk to your child’s healthcare provider about your child’s mental health and help your child learn how to manage their stress and anxiety.
Managing Triggers

- **Knowing** your triggers is a **very important** part of good asthma control.
- Speak to your health care provider if you are unsure about your triggers.
- If your asthma is triggered, it is important to follow your **asthma action plan** to avoid an emergency.
- Once you know your triggers, you can learn ways to avoid them!
Contact Us

If you have questions about asthma, please reach out for more information:

▶ Email: PedsAsthma@med.cornell.edu
▶ Phone: 212-746-4508

Visit our website for links to more resources:
https://pediatrics.weill.cornell.edu/divisions-programs/general-academic-pediatrics/pediatric-asthma-program