

Some Outdoor Asthma Triggers:

Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂), Ozone (O₃) and Dust

- Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂) is a common air pollutant that results from coal and oil-burning power plants.
- Ozone, also known as smog, is one of the most common air pollutants that can trigger asthma attacks.
- Dust is made up of solids (e.g., street sand from construction work, paint chips, smoke) or liquids (vehicle exhaust, etc.)

Action Steps:

Controlling outdoor triggers can be difficult. Here are some steps to reduce your exposure.

- Consider staying indoors when ozone or other pollutant levels are high.
- Pay attention to air pollution warnings in local newspapers, online, or on television and radio.
- Close windows and use air conditioning.
- Limit outdoor activities to early in the morning or later in the evening.
- Consider removing your shoes at the door.

Where can I find more information about Asthma?

Massachusetts Resources: American Lung Association of Massachusetts

Phone: 508-947-7204

Fax: 508-947-7208

Email: info@ala-ma.org

www.lungusa.org/massachusetts/

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America New England Chapter

Tel and TTY: 617-965-7771

toll†free: 1-877-2-ASTHMA

Fax: 617-965-8886

Email: info@asthmaandallergies.org

www.asthmaandallergies.org/

Boston Urban Asthma Coalition c/o Massachusetts Prevention Center

Tel: 617-279-2277

Fax: 617-282-3950

www.buac.org

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Asthma No Attacks Hotline

Tel: 1-866-662-8822

<http://www.epa.gov/asthma/>



For more information on this brochure contact:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Center for Environmental Health,
Bureau of Environmental Health Assessment

250 Washington Street, 7th Floor

Boston, MA 02108

617-624-5757

www.state.ma.us/dph/beha/beha.htm

Asthma

and Your Environment



Some chemicals and pollutants in your environment can make your asthma worse.

Your environment is where you live, learn, work, play or visit.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease that makes it difficult to breathe. Airways that carry air in and out of the lungs become swollen and tight. People who are having an asthma attack often cough, wheeze and feel that they need to catch their breath.

How do I know if I have asthma?

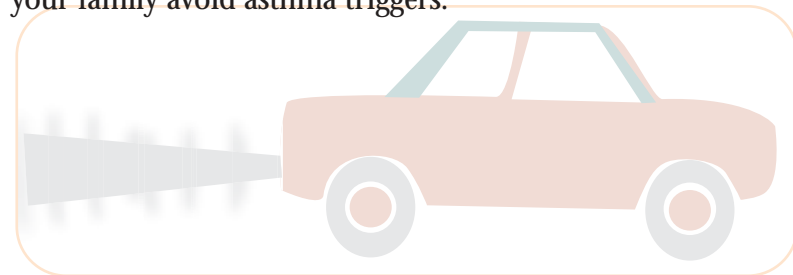
Talk to a doctor if you or someone in your family has trouble breathing. The cause of asthma is not known, and there is no cure. A serious asthma attack can even result in death.

What are environmental asthma triggers?

Asthma triggers are chemicals or allergens that make you have an asthma attack. Strong chemical smells, dust or pets can also trigger an asthma attack. Your asthma triggers may be very different than other people with asthma. Not all asthma triggers affect people the same way.

Environmental asthma triggers can be found both indoors and outdoors.

Use the following tips to help you and your family avoid asthma triggers.



Indoor Asthma Triggers:

Environmental Chemicals and Pollutants

- Strong smelling household cleaners or any product with a strong odor like paint, perfume, hairspray, air fresheners, bug-sprays, moth balls, bombs or foggers.
- The fumes from your car when idling in the garage or near your house or apartment. Idling is leaving your car engine on when the car is not moving.
- Vapors and or fumes/odors from gas, oil or kerosene stoves.

What you can do:

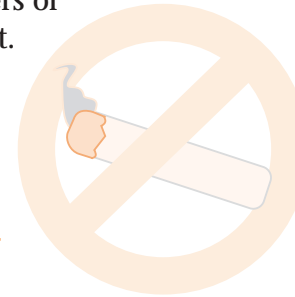
- Open a window when you use household cleaners or cook to allow fresh air into the house or apartment.
- Do not stay in the area of a car that is idling.
- Vent furnaces, electrical ranges, space heaters, gas, wood and coal stoves to the outside.

Secondhand Smoke

Smoke from a burning cigarette, pipe, cigar, etc.

What you can do:

- If you smoke, quit.
- If you do not smoke, avoid places where other people smoke.



Pets and Bugs

- Dander from birds, cats, dogs, gerbils, rats and mice can remain in the house or apartment dust long after the animal has left.

- Cockroach droppings can also affect asthma.

What you can do:

- Keep pets away from fabric-covered furniture (especially your bed), carpets and stuffed toys.
- Wash your hands, face and arms after playing with your pet.



Molds

- Molds live in warm, moist places such as basements, kitchens, bathrooms, under old carpets, ceiling tiles or any place that collects water.

What you can do:

- Prevent mold by repairing leaks and moisture areas.
- Wash all surfaces with vinegar (do not use bleach as it can trigger an asthma attack).
- Repair moldy ceiling tiles and carpets to keep mold away.

Household Dust Mites

- Dust mites are tiny insects that cannot be seen with the naked eye.
- Dust mites can be found in any fabric covered item in your home (mattresses, sofas, clothes, stuffed toys, carpets).

What you can do:

- Frequently wash bed sheets, pillowcases and blankets in hot water.
- Wear a mask when vacuuming and replace vacuum bags often.
- Use dust mite cover on your pillows and mattress.