

What is an Asthma Trigger?

One of the most important things you can do to manage your asthma is manage your triggers. A trigger is anything that causes your asthma symptoms to flare-up.

It might be something you're allergic to, such as pollen, animal dander, or dust mite allergens.

Asthma can also be triggered by inhaling an irritant, like smoke, chemicals, strong perfumes or other odors.

Changes in the weather, illness, and sometimes vigorous exercise can also cause a flare-up.

Strong emotions, laughing, crying and stress can also trigger an asthma attack.

Let's take a look at why triggers are a problem.

When you have asthma, the airways are very sensitive.

Each time you are exposed to a trigger, the airways become inflamed and swollen. The muscles around the airways tighten and excess mucus forms. This makes it more difficult to breathe.

As a result, you may experience coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, a tight feeling in the chest, or any combination of these symptoms.

Fortunately, by being aware of your triggers, you and your health care provider can develop a plan to help prevent asthma attacks.

For example, you may still visit family members and friends with pets, but your doctor might recommend you take additional asthma medications before your visit.

In order to determine what your triggers are, your healthcare provider may ask you about your home, job and hobbies. Keep an asthma diary to write down where you are, the time of day, and what you are doing when you have asthma episodes.

Allergy testing can also help determine your allergy profile.

Whatever your personal triggers are, it's important to discover them.

Identifying your triggers, avoiding those you can, and having a plan for what to do when you might encounter triggers will help you manage your asthma, instead of letting your asthma manage you.