



Trigger controls for asthma

What do secondhand smoke, dust mites, mold,

cockroaches, cats and nitrogen dioxide all have in common? If you guessed that they are all common indoor asthma triggers, you are correct! Americans spend up to 90% of their time indoors, where allergens and irritants can play a significant role in triggering asthma attacks.

Tuesday, May 5 was World Asthma Day, giving us the opportunity to raise awareness of this chronic condition which combined with allergies, affects one out of four Americans.

Did you know environmental control is one of the major goals of asthma management?

It is important to recognize potential asthma triggers in the indoor environment and reduce your exposure to those triggers. Triggers are everywhere and are a part of everyday life. Any home can be full of triggers like mold growing on your shower curtain or tiny dust mites that live in blankets, pillows, or your child's stuffed animals. Other asthma triggers may be air pollution, foods, respiratory infections and exercise.

You may not be affected by all of these triggers, but your doctor can help to determine which triggers affect your asthma and develop a specific plan to reduce your triggers. Although asthma is not curable at this time, changes in lifestyle and proper medication can reduce the frequency and severity of asthma attacks. The following are some steps you can take to help control asthma:

- Keep your home clean.
- Properly maintain heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems by regularly changing filters and cleaning humidifiers. Use high efficiency particle filters to remove particles from the indoor environment.
- Install exhaust fans in the kitchen and bathrooms.
- Relative humidity in the home should be kept at less than 60 percent. If humidifiers are used in the home, change the water daily and clean the tank weekly to prevent the growth of bacteria and mold.
- Do not allow cigarette smoking in your home. Avoid secondhand smoke as much as possible.
- Refrain from exercising outdoors during cold weather. During windy weather or after light rain, time outdoors should be limited because pollen counts may be high.

- Develop an asthma action plan to help prevent symptoms and to recognize them if they occur and to know what medicine to take and when to take it.

Managing environmental asthma triggers is just one way to control your asthma. Be sure to also communicate your asthma needs with care providers, teachers and coaches, obtain and use an asthma action plan, regularly visit your primary care doctor and regularly take your prescribed medications.