

Asthma-friendly home

Most people with asthma find their symptoms get worse when they are exposed to certain triggers. Some of these triggers can be found in and around the average home, such as dust mites, pollen and animal dander (skin, scale or fur particles). An important part of effective asthma management includes avoiding exposure to your particular triggers. There are many ways in which you can transform your home into an asthma-friendly place.

Common household triggers

Some of the more common household triggers include:

- **Dust mites** – these tiny creatures love warm, moist conditions and thrive in bedding and carpets. Their droppings cause the allergic reaction
- **Moulds** – need moist environments with poor ventilation
- **Pollens** – from trees, plants and grasses
- **Pets** – because of their fur, skin or scales (called 'dander')
- **Other triggers** – including cold dry air and cigarette smoke.

The air quality

Make your home a smoke-free zone. You should also pay attention to ventilation, heating and cooling. Ideally, the air in your home should be fresh and not too humid.

Improve **ventilation** by:

- Install extractor fans with external vents in the kitchen, bathroom and laundry.
- Use a range hood over your stove top.
- Have fixed air vents in all rooms to ensure air circulation.

Improve **heating and cooling** by:

- Choose radiant heating that doesn't collect or circulate dust.
- Avoid open fires because wood smoke can be a trigger.
- Avoid fan-forced ducted heating because it circulates dust.
- Choose refrigerated reverse-cycle systems because they take the moisture out of the air. Adjust if cold dry air is a trigger.
- Avoid evaporative cooling systems because they humidify the air.

Dust contains many allergen particles. Some suggestions on how to cut down on the amount of dust in your home include:

- Remove the carpet or, if that isn't possible, vacuum regularly.
- Vacuum any fabric-upholstered furniture regularly.
- Buy a vacuum with a good filter system.
- Use a damp cloth to dust furniture instead of dry dusting.
- Replace curtains with vertical blinds.
- Put doors on any open shelving units.

Reduce your dust mite population

Dust mites tend to thrive in beds and carpets. Some suggestions include:

- Have bare boards instead of carpets in the bedrooms.
- Use mattress, doona and pillow protectors.
- Vacuum the mattress every week.
- Hot wash all bedding every two weeks and dry in direct sunlight.
- Cut down on fluffy toys or put them in the freezer for 24 hours once a week.
- Air blankets weekly in direct sunlight.

Keep pets outside

If you don't want to get rid of any furry pets, there are ways of minimising their impact, including:

- Have your pets live outside.
- Keep pets out of the bedrooms.
- Brush or groom pets outside.
- Wash the pets every week.
- Clean out cages or litter boxes regularly.
- Choose non-shedding or low shedding pets.

Grow a 'low-allergen' garden

Ways of reducing the amount of allergens in your garden include:

- Weed regularly.
- Replace lawn with bricked or paved areas.
- Avoid rye grass.
- Choose plants that are pollinated by birds or insects rather than plants that release their seeds into the air.
- Replace mulch with pebbles or gravel.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Pharmacist
- Asthma Victoria on 1800 645 130.

Things to remember

- Most houses contain triggers which could make symptoms worse in people with asthma.
- Eliminating dust is an effective way to cut back on many allergens.
- Remove any suspect plants from your garden.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Asthma Foundation of Victoria

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