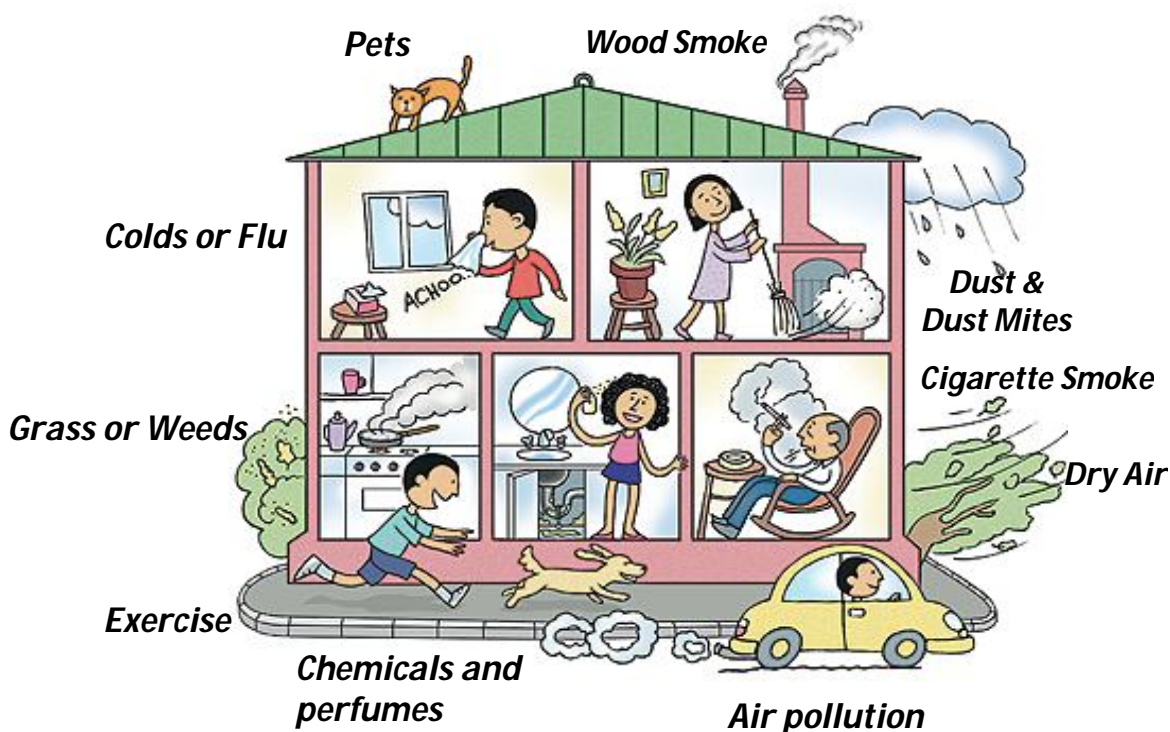


# ASTHMA PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT

Did you know that pollutants in your home may be affecting your child's respiratory health?

**Asthma** is a disease that narrows the airways that bring air in and out of the lungs. When the airways are sensitive to certain substances in the home (**called triggers**) they can become narrower or are blocked with mucus. An asthma attack occurs when someone isn't getting enough air to breathe. **Triggers** work by causing an allergic reaction or by directly irritating the airways, and some may work both ways. **Some common triggers are pictured below:**



**Other triggers** include **mold; mice and rats; cockroaches;** and **strong emotions** with laughing, crying, anger or fear.

**Warning Signs:** Watch for signs of an asthma attack to catch it before it gets worse. Warning signs might include coughing at night, a stuffy nose or runny nose, a tickle in the throat, sneezing or watery eyes, restlessness, a pale face, dark circles under eyes, tightness in chest, feeling weak or tired, or a cold, flu, fever, or headache. When is an asthma attack an emergency? Abnormal breathing patterns, uncontrollable coughing or wheezing, or bluish fingernails or lips indicate a need for immediate medical care.

*\*See reverse side for tips on managing and preventing asthma triggered by your indoor environment.\**

## ***How to Address Asthma Affected by Indoor Air Quality***

**First step: Consult with your primary care provider.** If you suspect that your child has asthma, seek a diagnosis. If you are uninsured, ask [Josiah Hill III Clinic](#) for a list of community clinics and organizations providing low cost and free services in Multnomah County.

**Second step: Identify your child's asthma triggers.** Think about when your child's asthma gets worse. Is it around smog or exhaust? Cigarette smoke? Pets? Dust? Look at the triggers on this page and think of which ones affect your child the most.

**Third step: Make a plan to keep your child away from asthma triggers.** You can do this by removing triggers from your home. Below are some common asthma triggers and ways to keep them from triggering asthma.

- **Secondhand Smoke:** Smoke from a cigarette, cigar or pipe *and* the smoke exhaled by a smoker can harm your child. Don't let anyone smoke near a child and if you smoke; do not smoke in your home or car.
- **Dust Mites:** These live in sheets, blankets, pillows, mattresses, soft furniture, carpets, and stuffed toys. Wash your bedding in hot water once a week and dry it completely, use plastic covers or dust proof covers on pillows and mattresses, dust your home weekly, choose stuffed toys that can be washed and dried completely.
- **Pets:** Do not let pets sleep with your child, and keep them off furniture and out of the child's bedroom.
- **Cockroaches and Pests:** Pests come to areas where there is food and water available, like your bathroom and kitchen, and areas where you store bags, boxes or newspapers. You can prevent pests by fixing leaky pipes; keeping sinks, counters, tables and floors clean; and cleaning crumbs and spills right away. Store food in airtight containers. If these steps do not eliminate pests, use roach baits or traps- *Don't use sprays to control pests because the chemicals in the air can trigger asthma.* Keep traps out of your child's reach.
- **Mold:** Mold grows in damp places like kitchens, bathrooms, and basements. If you see mold clean it immediately with 1 part white distilled vinegar and 1 part water. To prevent mold, allow airflow with fans and open windows. Even in winter, air out your home regularly.
- **Nitrogen dioxide:** Nitrogen dioxide is a gas that bothers your eyes, nose and throat and causes shortness or breath. It can come from appliances that burn gas, kerosene and wood. You can prevent it by using the exhaust fan in your kitchen, making sure space heaters and kerosene heaters are vented and doors to wood burning stoves are tight fitting.

**[Josiah Hill III Clinic: 503-802-7389; www.jhillclinic.org](#)**

**[Multnomah County Health Department's asthma program: 503-988-3400; www.multco.us/air](#)**