

# Identifying and Reducing Asthma and Allergy Triggers in the Home

## What are allergens?

Indoor and outdoor allergens can be visible and some are microscopic (you can't see them). When exposed to allergens, such as mold, pet dander or dust mites, our bodies react producing allergic/allergy symptoms. Allergens trigger allergies for some people.

## What are irritants?

Asthma irritants, like allergens, can make someone's asthma or allergic symptoms worse. These irritants can come from outside our homes like fire smoke or pollen and inside our homes, like cleaning products, air fresheners or from cockroach feces.

## Common allergens, irritants and triggers in the home:



Dust mites



Mold



Smoking



Chemicals



Candles and air fresheners



Pests and pesticides

## Follow these steps to reduce asthma and allergy triggers:

### Bedrooms

- Use allergen casements on child's bed and pillow.
- Wash bedding (including pillows and blankets) in warm to hot soapy water weekly.
- Avoid leaving clothes and other clutter on the floor.
- Use a HEPA filtered vacuum, if possible, and steam clean carpeting 1 to 2 times a year.
- Keep animals out of the bed or out of the bedroom.



## Bathrooms and Kitchens

- Clean suspect mold with warm soapy water (Hyperlink for Keep it Dry factsheet ).
- Keep areas dry around tub/shower and under sinks.
- Use exhaust fans, floor fans and open windows and doors for better ventilation.
- Use baits, gels and sticky traps for cockroaches.

## Living/Family Rooms

- Use a mat and leave shoes at entry way.
- Don't use air fresheners, candles or incense.
- Smoke outside and away from your home and windows.
- Keep clutter picked up and household items organized to reduce dust build-up.

## Basements

- Keep areas dry and free of any moisture.
- Use a dehumidifier to keep humidity between 30% and 50%.
- Store items in plastic totes instead of cardboard.

## General

- Many chemicals used in the home, including cleaning and disinfecting chemicals can be harmful to asthma patients and other sensitive populations (i.e. bleach is an asthmagen).
- Consider using items that are known to be less harmful, such as vinegar, lemon concentrate, baking soda. Check out our colleagues' factsheets on safer cleaning:



Safer Disinfectant Use  
National PEHSU



Disinfectants Fact Sheet  
Western States PEHSU



Green Cleaning  
Region 2 PEHSU

If you have questions that are not answered here, please visit [Mid-America Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit \(MAPEHSU\) Children's Mercy Kansas City webpage](#) at [cmkc.link/MAPEHSU](https://cmkc.link/MAPEHSU) for further guidance. If you cannot find answers to your questions online, call our PEHSU hotline at **(800) 421-9916** (March 2022).

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