



mercy care



IMPROVING LUNG HEALTH

Spring/Summer 2021

5 common asthma triggers

Wheezing again? If you have asthma, this may mean you've been exposed to one of your triggers. That's something that makes your asthma worse. Triggers can be different for everyone. Your doctor can help you find out what yours are.

Here are five of the most common triggers — and how to avoid them:

1. **Tobacco smoke.** If you smoke, ask your doctor for help to quit. Ask others not to smoke around you — or in your home or car.
2. **Pets with fur.** If possible, keep them outside or out of your bedroom. Vacuum often, and mop once a week.

3. **Mold.** Fix leaky pipes promptly. Use a dehumidifier to keep the air in your home dry.
4. **Roaches.** Get rid of any water or food sources that might attract them. Clean up crumbs, and sweep up every few days. Consider roach traps if these bugs are still a problem.
5. **Dust mites.** These tiny bugs live in dust. To avoid breathing them in, wrap mattresses and pillows in mite-proof covers. Wash bedding once a week.

Sources: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (www.aaaai.org); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

4 ways to take charge

If you have a chronic condition, take it step by step:

1. Learn all you can about it.
2. Work with your doctor on a care plan.
3. Take your medications.
4. Aim for healthy habits.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (www.ahrq.gov)

3 key things to know about asthma

The more you know about asthma, the better care you can take of yourself if you have it. Start with these three facts:

- 1. Asthma doesn't go away.** You won't always have symptoms, but the airways in your lungs are always inflamed. To prevent flare-ups, you need to stick to your treatment plan — even if you feel fine.
- 2. An asthma action plan can help you feel good.** Ask your doctor if you don't have one. An action plan will tell you how to avoid your triggers. It will include a list of medicines you need to take and when to take them. Review your plan each time you see your doctor. Ask questions about any part you don't understand. Following your action plan can help keep you out of the hospital.
- 3. An asthma attack can be severe.** It can even be life-threatening. Don't take the disease lightly — some people die from asthma. That's why it's important to get emergency medical help for a severe flare-up. Your action plan will spell out when to call **911** or your doctor.

Sources: American Lung Association (www.lung.org); National Institutes of Health (www.nih.gov)



Exercising with COPD: You can do this!

Exercise and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) might not seem like they go together — but they do.

If you have COPD, exercise won't make your condition worse. In fact, it can help you feel better.

Getting started

Talk with your doctor before starting an exercise program on your own. Ask about the types and amounts of exercise that are right for you.

Your doctor might want you to start with pulmonary rehab. That's a series of exercise classes where you can learn how to be active with less shortness of breath.

If you are on oxygen, you should work out with it. Your doctor can show you

how to adjust the flow rate when you're active instead of resting.

Be active every day

You should start out slow and easy at first. You can increase your time and effort by doing a little more each day.

Aim for a mix of:

- Aerobic exercise, like walking or swimming
- Muscle-building moves with weights or bands
- Stretching to warm up and cool down

To stay motivated, set small goals for yourself. You'll be surprised what you can do!

Sources: American Lung Association (www.lung.org); COPD Foundation (www.copdfoundation.org)

Need help? A care manager can tell you more about your condition. They can connect you with a provider too. Call Member Services and ask for the Care Management Department.

Ready, set, action: Make a plan to manage COPD

If you have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), an action plan can be a huge help.

What a plan can do for you

Your plan can tell you:

- What medicines you need and when to take them
- How to spot a flare-up
- When you should use oxygen therapy
- When you should get more rest
- When to start pursed-lip breathing
- When to call your doctor
- When to call **911** or go to the ER

Your plan can also remind you of the steps you're taking to feel better and protect your health. That can include things like:

- Flu and pneumonia shots
- Resources to help you quit smoking
- Your exercise and diet plans
- Pulmonary rehab to help improve your breathing

Keep up the good work!

If you don't have a COPD action plan, talk with your doctor. It's an important document the two of you can work on together.



If you do have one, bring it to each doctor visit. That way, you and your doctor can talk about how it's working for you.

*Source: American Lung Association
(www.lung.org)*

Know the risks of opioids

Opioids are strong pain medicines. They're easy to get addicted to.

If you need help with pain, talk to your doctor about safer options. If you use an opioid, take the smallest dose you can for the shortest time, and ask about Narcan. It could save your life.

Want to be drug-free? Call the National Helpline at **1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)**.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov)

Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to **www.MercyCareAZ.org** or call Member Services at **1-800-624-3879 (TTY: 711)** and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.

Contract services are funded under contract with AHCCCS. This newsletter contains general health information that should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

If you would no longer like to receive this mailing, please call Member Services and ask for the Care Management Department.

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