

MANAGING ALLERGIC ASTHMA AT HOME

A common misconception about asthma and allergies is that they always go away, but asthma and allergies can be chronic, life-long conditions. That's why it's important to be proactive in managing your or your child's condition, which includes learning to avoid allergic triggers. The following tips are designed to help reduce allergic triggers throughout your home.

LEARN THE BASICS

- › Use an air purifier and vacuum with a HEPA filter to help capture airborne particles such as dust and pet dander
- › Be sure to wash everything, including the walls, as often as possible
- › For quick dusting around your house, use a dryer sheet or electrostatic cloth to pick up dust
 - › Avoid feather dusters as they simply move dust around
 - › Check your ceiling fan and other fans for dust, as they can spray dust around the room
 - › Start from the ceiling and move your way down to the floor
 - › Wear a dust mask around your nose and mouth to reduce exposure to allergens as you are cleaning
- › If you only have 10 minutes to clean, start with the places where dust gathers—in air vents, on ceiling fans and under rugs and dressers
- › Replace air conditioner/heater filters on a quarterly basis
- › Go pet-free if possible. If that's not an option, there are a few things you can do:
 - › Keep pets out of bedrooms and off upholstered furniture
 - › Clean areas where your pet spends a lot of time
 - › Wash your pet's bedding in hot water as often as possible
 - › Bathe your pet once a week

FOCUS ON COMMON LIVING SPACES

- › It is best to skip carpeting and rugs completely. A great alternative is a simple area rug which is much easier to clean
- › Whether your floor is carpet, rug, tile or hardwood, try to clean it on a weekly basis if not more frequently
- › Choose furniture with removable cushions for an easier clean
- › Countertops should be an easy-to-clean material that does not harbor allergens

KEEP WORKSPACES CLEAN

- › De-cluttering an office is important, but what cannot be thrown away should be kept in closed cabinets, drawers and bins
- › Start with an annual review of files to remove or shred old, unnecessary documents
- › Don't forget to remove dust from forgotten places —behind cabinets, bookshelves, around computer equipment like cords or surge protectors, and on piles of books and papers
- › Open windows to air out the office or consider installing a fan or air purifier if you have no windows
- › Be sure to clean or dust window blinds and sills, and other places where allergens collect

TIDY THE BEDROOMS

- › Keep bedrooms clear and clean; the less clutter, the less dust build-up
- › Allergy-friendly pillows are a must
- › Rule of three for items on which you sleep:
Wash zippered mattress covers every three weeks;
Wash zippered pillowcases every three months;
Replace pillows every three years
- › Encase mattresses and pillows in washable, allergen-proof and dust-mite proof covers
 - › Wash in at least 130 degree Fahrenheit water on a weekly basis
- › Remove stuffed animals from sleeping areas as they can contain dust mites
 - › Wash them in pillowcases at least once a month to limit wear and tear
 - › As an alternative, place them in the freezer inside a plastic bag for 24 hours to reduce dust mites
- › Clean closets twice a year by removing everything, cleaning thoroughly, mopping or steam cleaning the floor, and putting back only what is needed
 - › Hang clothing inside out to shake off dust

Even with all these tips, if you or your child is experiencing allergic asthma, **it's important to talk to a specialist, such as an allergist or pulmonologist, to come up with the best treatment plan.** It is also important to stay compliant with medication, which can be discussed with your or your child's specialist.