



# SPRING FOCUS ON ASTHMA

It's spring! The trees are turning green, the flowers are blooming, and the air is fresh. For someone with asthma, spring is often a difficult time to manage asthma symptoms. The pollens from the trees, flowers, and grass can trigger an asthma flare-up. Taking your controller medicine as directed by your doctor and avoiding your asthma triggers may help you enjoy spring with fewer asthma flare-ups.

## Asthma Triggers Are...

- Things that cause asthma symptoms or flare-ups.
- Different for everyone.
- Identifiable. Learn what things trigger your asthma symptoms.
- Avoidable. Take steps to avoid your asthma triggers.

## What Are Your Asthma Symptoms?

There are five main asthma symptoms. You may have all, some, or just one of these symptoms. They can be mild or severe and change from day to day.

- Wheezing—a whistling noise when you breathe
- Cough
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath
- Mucus with coughing

Worsening of your asthma symptoms is a sign that you are having a flare-up.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Stress can change breathing patterns that can then trigger asthma symptoms.**

## Types of Asthma Triggers

Asthma is often put into categories or groups based on the triggers that cause the asthma symptoms or flare-ups.

- **Allergic asthma symptoms** – triggered by allergens such as pollen or pet dander.
- **Nonallergic asthma symptoms** – triggered by materials in the air such as tobacco smoke, wood smoke, room fresheners, fresh paint, cleaning products, cooking odors, perfumes, and air pollution. Other triggers include colds, the flu, cold air, and even heartburn.
- **Exercise-induced asthma symptoms** – occur with exercise or physical activity.
- **Nighttime asthma symptoms** – occur at night, waking you from sleep.

**REMEMBER: Work with your doctor to learn more about your asthma triggers and how to better manage them.**

## Asthma Affects the Airways of the Lungs

Two main things happen during an asthma flare-up:

- **Inflammation** – the airways become swollen and filled with mucus.
- **Constriction** – the muscles around the airways tighten, making the airways narrower.

Both these things make it hard for you to breathe.

### Is It Serious?

Asthma is serious. There is no way to tell when your mild asthma symptoms may become life-threatening. Remember:

- Work with your doctor to manage your asthma.
- Take your controller medicine every day or as directed by your doctor, even if you feel fine.
- Work with your doctor to develop an Asthma Action Plan and follow it.
- Be aware of your asthma triggers and how to avoid them when possible.

## CONTROL TRIGGERS BY...

- Using an Air Conditioner** – at least in the bedroom (change filter often).
- Using Filters** – when heating with forced air. Place a filter over each vent to help trap allergens (change filters often).
- Covering Bedding** – choose pillows with Dacron<sup>®\*</sup>, foam, or other man-made fillings. Cover mattress and box spring with allergen-proof covers (wash at least once a week in hot water).
- Limiting Pets** – keep pets outside. At the very least, keep the bedroom “pet free.”
- Controlling Odors** – keep home smoke-free, and reduce the use of household cleaners.
- Maintaining Dry & Clean Areas** – keep bathrooms dry with a fan or dehumidifier to prevent mold.
- Reducing Stress** – decrease stress and tension. Relax.
- Decorating Carefully** – choose furniture, window covers, and flooring that can be easily cleaned.

\*Dacron is a registered trademark of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company.

**REMEMBER: If you are using your quick-relief (rescue) medicine more than twice a week, or waking up at night with asthma symptoms more than twice a month, your asthma may not be controlled as well as it could be. Talk to your doctor.**