

With asthma, the air passages are overly sensitive, increasing the likelihood of an asthma episode. Substances or conditions called “triggers” cause the airways in the lungs to become swollen and inflamed. Asthma triggers can vary from person to person.



Knowing the triggers will help you manage your child's asthma.

Some of the most common things that bring on asthma symptoms are airborne allergens and irritants, viruses and exercise.

Airborne allergens are substances that are breathed in, and that can cause an allergic reaction. That is, in some people, the immune system—which helps protect the body from illness—sees them as harmful and reacts in an overly strong way to protect the body against them. Some of the most common allergens that affect people who have asthma are:

- Cockroaches and other common indoor insects
- Dust mites—tiny bugs (too small to see) that thrive in dust contained in mattresses, upholstered furniture, carpets and stuffed animals
- Pets
- Pollen from trees, grass and weeds
- Molds, both indoor and outdoor

Irritants are things in the environment that may irritate the lungs. Some of the most common irritants are:

- Tobacco smoke
- Air pollution, including ozone
- Chemicals from newly installed linoleum flooring, synthetic carpeting, particleboard, wall coverings, furniture and recent painting
- Gas stoves and other appliances not vented to the outdoors
- Fumes from buses, wood-burning appliances or fireplaces
- Strong odors or sprays, such as perfume, talcum powder, hairspray and paints
- Changes in weather and exposure to cold air

Other things that bring on asthma symptoms in some people include:

- Exercise or play
- Viral respiratory infections, including the common cold, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and influenza
- Bacterial respiratory infections, including pneumonia

