

Living well with asthma

May is asthma awareness month

For those 20 million Americans with asthma, the difference between suffering with symptoms and living with them can be a well-rounded action plan.¹

While asthma is a serious lung condition that can cause airways to become blocked or narrowed, it is possible to live an active and comfortable life year-round. Even with the most diligent treatment plan, you cannot always avoid an asthma episode. However, you can control your exposure to many asthma triggers.

- Eliminate or strictly limit exposure to inhaled triggers like **tobacco smoke, wood smoke** and other **strong odors or fumes** like paint, perfume or cleaning products.
- **Pet hair** can transfer allergens from outdoors into your home. Even indoor pets can attract mold, dust mites and pollen from shoes and clothing. Keep pets brushed and groomed regularly and avoid pets in homes you visit.
- **Mold** flourishes in high humidity and in areas with poor circulation, including kitchens, bathrooms and basements. Dehumidifiers can help, as can ventilation fans and regular cleaning.
- Need incentive to dust and vacuum more often? **Cockroach** droppings and small pieces of dead roaches make their way into carpet fibers and house dust, ending up in the air you and your family breathe.
- **Dust mites**, microscopic spiders that feed off the plant and animal material that makes up dust, thrive in the high humidity of bathrooms, and where human skin flakes away, including rooms where families spends a lot of time.
 - Dust these areas frequently (use a damp cloth, no aerosol sprays)
 - Cover mattresses and pillows in allergen-impermeable enclosures, and tape over the length of the zippers
 - Consider a dehumidifier

Under your doctor's care, an exercise program can be a beneficial part of your healthy lifestyle and should not worsen asthma symptoms.

- Always use your asthma inhalers (inhaled bronchodilators) before exercising.
- Perform warm-up and cool-down exercises before and after workouts.
- Exercise indoors in winter or wear protection over your nose and mouth.
- Avoid exercising outdoors when pollen counts and air pollution are high.
- Always exercise at a level that is appropriate for you.

Talk to your doctor before beginning any exercise regimen.²

Following your asthma action plan by taking prescribed medications, avoiding triggers and monitoring your symptoms and lung function will help you maintain a normal and healthy lifestyle.

1. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), aafa.org/

2. WebMD Asthma Guide, webmd.com