

Breathing Freely: Controlling Asthma Triggers

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

This video is produced by the U.S. Environment Protection Agency to help parents and caregivers learn more about things found indoors and outdoors that can trigger asthma symptoms. Identifying a child's triggers and limiting their exposure to them is an important step in managing asthma.

Breathing Freely, Controlling Asthma Triggers

Male Narrator: Asthma is a disease that affects millions of children but it doesn't have to affect their quality of life. Monica Cardoza: Daniela's very active. She does participate in any sport. I think that's one of the things that kept her from getting asthma attacks. It helps her to exercise.

Narrator: A doctor can help you understand what causes your child's asthma attacks and develop a written asthma management plan customized for your child's case. Though there is no cure for asthma, the good news is that asthma attacks can be prevented.

Dr. Mendez: It is important for patients to realize that they can live a normal lifestyle and grow up to be a completely normal adults, as long as they follow the recommendations of their physicians and maintain the treatment plans that they've been prescribed.

Narrator: What is asthma? Narrator: Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs. In an asthma episode or attack, the airways in the lungs constrict, causing the lungs to get less air than normal. Typical symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, wheezing, tightness in the chest, and coughing. Asthma symptoms can range from mild discomfort to life-threatening emergencies if breathing stops completely.

Angie Samscock (school nurse): Asthma affects many people. One out of every 13 school-aged children is affected by asthma.

Narrator: According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, asthma is the most common chronic childhood illness and is the third-ranking cause of hospitalization among children younger than 15. Asthma accounts for many emergency room visits and hospital stays, costing billions of dollars in treatment each year.

Female Narrator: What causes an asthma attack? Male Narrator: Asthma attacks may be caused by many environmental triggers that are all around us, both indoors and outdoors.

Female Narrator: Children spend the majority of their time indoors, where they may be exposed to asthma triggers. Indoor triggers such as secondhand smoke, mold, cockroaches, and animal dander.

Male Narrator: But not every trigger affects everyone in the same way so it is important for each person to know which triggers affect them most. Daniela is 6 years old. The things that trigger her asthma attacks are found in many homes.

Monica Cardoza: The symptoms that I noticed that Daniela gets before she starts getting an attack is she'll start coughing and she can't stop so I have to make her sit down for a little while so she can relax. And inside what causes her to do that is if I'm sweeping or if I'm dusting. She starts coughing and I can see that she starts getting her asthma real bad.

Dr. Menendez: The triggers that can provoke asthma attack in the home for patients with asthma include such things as allergens, that we find in pets, such as cats and dogs, also house dust mites, and also cockroaches in houses that have cockroaches.

Tips to Control Indoor Asthma Triggers
Female Narrator: To avoid pet dander, remove the pet from the home or keep the pet outside. Keep pets out of sleeping areas and off furniture.

Male Narrator: To avoid dust mites, wash bedding weekly in hot water. Use dust-proof covers on pillows and mattresses. Vacuum carpets and furniture every week. Wash stuffed toys in hot water.

Female Narrator: To avoid cockroaches, clean dishes, crumbs or spills right away. Store food in tightly sealed containers. Use roach baits or traps instead of sprays. Cover trash cans.

Dr. Menendez: We worry about secondhand smoke. We worry about exposure to molds which grow on surfaces that are humid or that are contaminated with water in the home.

Male Narrator: To avoid secondhand smoke, do not smoke in your home or car and do not allow others to do so.

Female Narrator: To prevent mold, fix water leaks as soon as possible. Clean mold with soap and water and dry completely. Control humidity by using an air conditioner, dehumidifier, or exhaust fan.

Outdoor triggers
Male Narrator: Not all asthma triggers are found inside. Outdoor triggers can also cause asthma attacks.

Female Narrator: Outdoor asthma triggers include allergens, such as pollen or air pollutants, such as ozone and particle pollution. Particle pollution is composed of microscopic solids or liquid droplets that are small enough to get into the lungs and trigger asthma attacks.

Dr. Menendez: Patients that have asthma, experience symptoms of asthma and sometimes attacks of asthma when exposed to outdoor triggers such as air pollution primarily coming from ozone, also particulate pollution such as we see with dusty days in areas in the inner city that are exposed to a lot of heavy traffic.

Female Narrator: Taylor, who is 7 years old, started having asthma attacks at a very early age. Taylor Stewart: When I have an asthma attack, it feels like my lungs hurt and I start wheezing and coughing. Female Narrator: Taylor's attacks are often caused by outdoor triggers. Richard Stewart: Try to follow through.

Linda Stewart: Pollen is usually very thick in our neighborhood because there are many trees. Tyler Stewart: Oh, dunk it! Oh, you dunked it! Linda Stewart: When the wind blows outside, and particularly a fall day or a spring day, not a good day. It's going to be an asthma day. So, on those days, we like to keep her inside.

Male Narrator: No matter what triggers your child's asthma, his or her school nurse is an important ally in managing symptoms and preventing attacks.

Angie: It's a big communication factor between all of us the staff and her family and with Taylor herself to help control her triggers because she has asthma related to her allergens, related to the cold weather, related to outdoor problems too.

Linda Stewart: As a parent, I'm very concerned when I send my child off to school or anywhere when I'm not there to let them know what her health requirements are. But everyone knows that, either through my husband or myself, or Taylor telling them, "Listen, I have asthma. These are the things I need to avoid."

Male Narrator: Outdoor asthma triggers can't be eliminated, but their effects can be minimized by limiting your exposure to them.

Limit Your Exposure to Outdoor Asthma Triggers
Dr. Menendez: When the patient with asthma lives in an urban center, it's probably of value to them to check to see what the air Quality Index for that particular day in that particular city is going to be. They can obtain that information through their local news media. They can also check the signs sometimes that are posted along the highways.

Male Narrator: Air quality information is also available on EPAs's website at www.epa.gov.

Female Narrator: Here are some tips on how to control asthma if outdoor triggers affect your child. Tips to Control Outdoor Asthma Triggers

Female Narrator: Check the air quality index (AQI) reported on television and in the newspaper. When the AQI levels are unhealthy, remind your child to take it easier outdoors to limit the amount of pollution he or she breathes in. Use an air conditioner to filter outside air coming into the home or car. Be aware that asthma attacks may also occur or worsen the day after pollution levels are high.

Male Narrator: Doctors also encourage asthma patients to keep up with the latest treatments to help them live a normal life.

Monica Cardoza: For Daniela, what I do for her so she'll live a normal life, first of all, I do continue taking her to the doctor to get checked. I do give her her medications.

Linda Stewart: Taylor really has a normal life. There are just precautions that we need to take. She dances. She plays soccer. She's one of the best hip-hop dancers that I know. It doesn't limit her life. As long as we take the necessary precautions like keeping the house clean, watching the Air Quality Index, informing those that she's going to be with about how to manage her asthma should she have an attack. She lives a very normal life.

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-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

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