

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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Managing Asthma through an Asthma Action Plan

Written by

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An action plan won't "cure" asthma, but it can make a huge difference in how well it is kept under control. This simple plan can assist child care providers and parents when breathing problems flare.

An asthma action plan is a written plan that is created with your child's doctor to help manage your child's asthma. The plan should include: medications, triggers, and most importantly what to do in case of an emergency. It is imperative that the action plan is shared with your child care facility.

A few final tips:

The asthma action plan should be updated in the event of: changes or discontinuation of medications, after annual physicals, and if changes in triggers occur. Don't forget to update your emergency contact information and information about your physician.

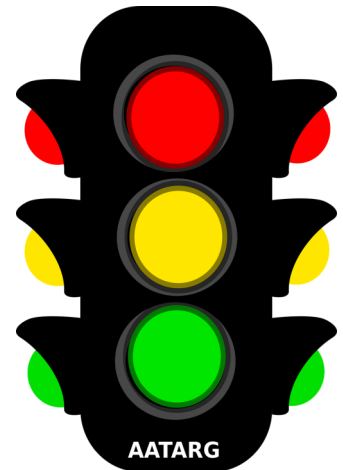


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The asthma action plan is generally divided into zones similar to stop lights.

- **Green is the Go!** Zone and ideally where you want the child to be. Breathing is easy, there is no cough or wheezing. The child can play and participate in activities with no restrictions.
- **Yellow Zone indicates caution or slow down.** There may be difficulty breathing or wheezing. The child might also experience tightness in the chest in this zone. It may also indicate what to do when a child encounters a trigger, such as a cold or weather changes.
- **Red Zone means stop** and is the most serious of the zones. Characteristics of the Red Zone are difficulty breathing, talking or walking. It also indicates when to contact

Healthy Home Hacks

Wash bedding once per week in hot water (130 degrees or hotter) will help control dust mites, a common allergy/asthma trigger, that like to make their homes in mattresses and pillows ~ Emma O. Poston

Bring the outdoors in. According to NASA studies, certain houseplants can help filter out toxins from indoor air. Some of the most effective plants include the Peace lily and Florist's chrysanthemum ~ Emma O. Poston

Naturally freshen the air in your home by opening a window, using essential oils, or simmering ingredients like rosemary and lemon on your stovetop. Placing a bowl of white vinegar in a room can also absorb unwanted odors. ~ Emma O. Poston

Make the bedroom a pet-free zone. Dog and cat dander can trigger asthma attacks. Keeping the bedroom door closed, especially while sleeping will reduce your exposure to pet dander. ~ Diane Bales

Keep the Pollution Out of Your Home

Written by: Ida Jackson, FACS Extension Agent, Wilkes County

Indoor air pollution is one of the top environmental health risks. The best ways to address the risk is to limit, or eliminate, the sources of pollutants, and to ventilate your home with clean air. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), nearly 26 million Americans adults and children have asthma. Exposure to some environmental conditions can set off symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and difficulty catching your breath. In addition to common asthma and allergy triggers, you may be exposed to other indoor air quality issues. Below are some helpful things you can do to reduce pollutants in your home.

- *Establish a smoke-free zone.* According to the American Lung Association secondhand smoke is a serious health hazard causing more than 41,000 deaths per year.
- *Test home for radon.* Radon is an odorless and colorless gas that can cause lung cancer. The only way to know the level of radon in your home is to test. For more information visit www.ugaradon.org.
- *Keep indoor humidity below 60%, ideally 30-50%.* This can be challenging during the humid summer months, but running the air conditioner will help reduce indoor humidity. Purchase an inexpensive hygrometer to measure the humidity in your home.
- *Repair all leaks and drips* to prevent standing water, which encourages the growth of mold. Mold is everywhere, but without sufficient moisture, it won't grow.
- *Control cockroaches.* Roaches produce substances or allergens that aggravate asthma and cause allergic reactions. You can control them by putting away food, covering trash, plugging holes, and using baits to reduce or eliminate them.
- *Avoid burning wood* in the home as the smoke adds to indoor pollution.
- *Don't cover odors* with scented candles, air fresheners, or essential oils. Clean whatever is causing the odor and ventilate to add fresh air.
- *Select hard surfaced flooring instead of carpet.* It is easier to clean and throw rugs can be removed and cleaned. In cases where hard surface flooring is not an option, vacuum at least 3 times a week. A HEPA vacuum is recommended, especially in homes where someone has asthma or sever allergies.



Image source: Pixabay

Reduce Asthma Triggers in Child Care and Homes

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Extension Agent, Crisp County

Did you know that there are things you can do to help reduce triggers for asthma? Let's explore ways that you are able to take control. In the United States about one out of every ten children suffer with asthma. Asthma is a chronic lung condition in which the airways are inflamed and cause airway obstructions. Triggers are those things that bring on an asthma attack. Like anything, triggers are different for each person. It is a good idea to keep a journal and note what things set off your child's symptoms. Below is a list of common asthma triggers and suggestions for reducing the impact

“Like anything, triggers are different for each person.”

- **Cigarette smoke:** Encourage smokers to smoke outside their homes and cars.
- **Dust mites:** Clean frequently, removing carpets and rugs from bedrooms, washing stuffed animals in hot water, and changing air filters regularly
- **Animal dander:** Make the bedroom off limits to indoor pets and shampoo pets once a week.
- **Cockroaches:** Clean and vacuum regularly, remove food and water sources, empty the trash frequently, and seal areas where pests could enter the house.
- **Mold and Mildew:** Wipe down wet shower walls, repair leaks, use fan when showering and cooking, keep indoor humidity below 60%, and keep water from accumulating around the foundation.
- **Household Irritants:** Reduce the number of household cleaning products used and have your child wear a mask when helping with household cleaning.
- **Exercise:** Activities such as swimming, walking, leisure biking, or hiking can increase endurance.
- **Cold weather:** Encourage children to breathe through their nose and wear a scarf to cover the mouth to help reduce cold air entering the lungs.
- **Strong emotions:** Work with your child to relax and breathe during times when their emotions could escalate,

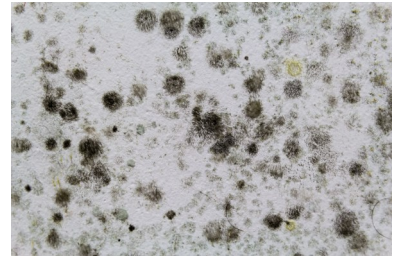


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Remember you can help to reduce some of the environmental triggers for asthma in your home – be proactive. If your child has asthma, be sure to check with a physician.



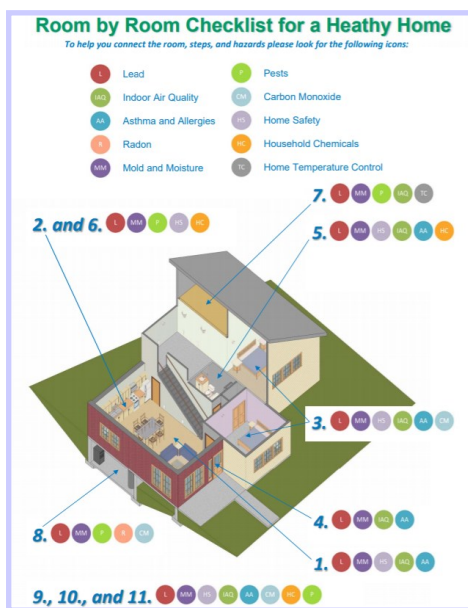
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Helpful Hints for Healthy Indoor Environments

Written by: Pamela R. Turner, PhD, Housing Extension Specialist

There are many things you can do to make your home a healthier and safer place for you and your family. The Healthy Homes Checklist provides a room-by-room guide to identify problems and make changes to improve the health and safety of your home. Take the next 30 days to do a thorough inspection of your home and make changes and implement new practices as needed. You can find a room by room checklist in the HUD booklet – *Everyone deserves a safe and healthy home, Consumer action guide*. For the complete checklist visit <https://tinyurl.com/ya68eukb>.



Images from *Everyone deserves a safe and healthy home*.



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