

ASTHMA CONTROL QUIZ: ARE YOU DOING EVERYTHING YOU CAN?

If you have asthma, you know it's prudent to stay away from things that trigger your coughing and wheezing. But how vigilant do you have to be? And are there other ways you can keep your asthma symptoms to a minimum?

1. Changes in the weather can trigger asthma attacks. True

A number of weather patterns have been linked to increases in asthma attacks, including thunderstorms, strong winds, hot and cold temperatures, fog and humidity. Knowing what weather conditions aggravate your asthma can help you plan ahead for possible attacks.

2. Keep the humidity level in your home high. This will reduce your risk of an asthma attack. False

It's best to keep the humidity low — between 30 percent and 50 percent — in your home and office. High humidity can promote the growth of mold, which might trigger your asthma symptoms. Using an air conditioner or air dehumidifier may help.

3. Cockroaches can trigger asthma attacks. True

Cockroaches can cause asthma symptoms. In some areas of the United States, as many as 40 percent of people are allergic to cockroaches. Most people who have asthma symptoms due to cockroaches live in crowded urban areas. If you think cockroaches might be causing your symptoms, take steps to make your home less appealing to these insects.

4. Cleaning your house can trigger your asthma. True

Strong odors and chemicals in common cleaning supplies can trigger asthma in some people. This doesn't get you off the hook when it comes to cleaning, though. Try unscented and nonaerosol cleaners. If they, too, irritate your asthma, you might need to get someone else to do the cleaning. If you're allergic to dust, vacuuming can stir up the dust in your home, so hand the vacuuming over to someone else.

5. If exercise triggers your asthma, it should be avoided, along with the rest of your triggers. False

Exercise is one trigger that you don't have to avoid completely. You can reduce your asthma symptoms during exercise by warming up slowly and taking medications before you exercise, especially in colder weather. See your doctor before you start exercising if you don't currently exercise regularly.

6. Appliances in your home might trigger your asthma. True

Home appliances that create heat through combustion can trigger asthma attacks. These appliances include furnaces, gas ranges and ovens, space heaters, gas clothes dryers and fireplaces. Appliances that use common fuels such as natural gas, fuel oil, kerosene, wood or coal can produce pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and sulfur dioxide, as well as water vapor. Pollutants can irritate your airways. Water vapor can create high humidity in your home, which can promote mold growth.

7. Controlling stress in your life can help control your asthma. True

Stress and anxiety can trigger your asthma symptoms. But in a fast-paced world, stress may seem unavoidable. You might find that a massage or yoga class can help you feel more relaxed. Or perhaps exercise or meditation might work. Remember to take time for yourself to reduce your stress.

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