

Trigger Tracker

Use copies of this tool to keep track of your triggers. Bring it to your next asthma checkup.

Where was I when my asthma got worse?



Other: _____

When did my asthma get worse?



What was around me or what was I doing when my asthma got worse?

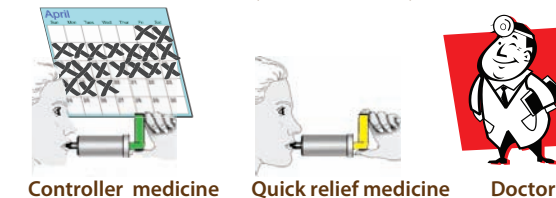


Other: _____

How were my symptoms?



What did I do about my asthma today?



...until a few simple steps made a big difference.



Gloria & D.J.

"The nurse said that a lot of things can make my grandson's asthma worse, not just cigarettes. She told me that everyone's triggers are different. Even my perfume could be a problem! Now I'm paying more attention."

Kelly



"I'm noticing where I am and what I am doing when my asthma gets worse, even if I don't always write it down. I've learned that my asthma bothers me more when it is hot outside. The doctor and I came up with a plan. Now I know what to do to keep my asthma from bothering me, even when it is really hot."

EDDIE



"I started keeping my dog out of the room where I sleep. Now I don't stay awake coughing. I'm so glad that there was something I could do to help my asthma and still keep my dog."

What are YOUR next steps?

Resources

Asthma information

New York State Department of Health
(800) 458-1158
www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/asthma/

American Lung Association
(800) LUNG-USA (800) 586-4872
www.lungusa.org

Learn more about triggers

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
(212) 637-3660
www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/

Talk to your doctor

Use the **Trigger Tracker** and **Key Questions** in this brochure with your doctor.

Get copies of **Trigger Tracker** and **Key Questions** at www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/asthma/brochures.htm

Partnership for Clear Health Communication
www.npsf.org/askme3/

Other resources

Local Health Departments
In New York City, dial 3-1-1.

Outside of New York City, call 1-800-458-1158 and ask for your county health department.

Cornell Cooperative Extension
www.cce.cornell.edu/home

New York State Smoker's Quitline
(866) 697-8487

Get a JUMP on asthma

We asked patients, doctors and other health experts what people should know about asthma. We used their ideas to develop this brochure. We heard again and again that better asthma control takes teamwork between doctors and patients. We hope that this information helps doctors and patients talk to each other about asthma symptoms and solutions.

Have asthma but can't figure out what makes it worse? Gloria, Kelly and Eddie were just like you...



Gloria & D.J.



"My grandson's asthma attacks just seem to happen. I heard that asthma problems can be caused by cigarette smoke but nobody in our house smokes."

Kelly



"The doctor said I should keep track of what I am doing when my asthma gets worse. But, I have a lot going on. Writing stuff down just isn't going to work for me."

EDDIE



"I know that my dog makes my asthma worse, but there isn't a lot I can do about it. I'm not getting rid of Moe. He's a member of my family."

Find out about triggers

A *trigger* is anything that makes your asthma worse. Triggers are different for each person. A trigger can be something you are allergic to, but it doesn't have to be.

Triggers can be indoors or outdoors. Many common triggers are found at home, school and at work. Some common triggers are smoke, food, dust, weather, colds, flu and stress.

Learn your triggers

Notice where you are and what you're doing when your asthma gets worse. Try using the **Trigger Tracker** on the back of this brochure. Share this information with your doctor. This can help you and your doctor learn about your triggers. Once you know your triggers, you can learn different ways to stay away from them.

Stay a step ahead

Your triggers

Keep your asthma triggers out of your home or take steps to stop them from making your asthma worse if you can't keep them out. For example, don't use perfume or smelly products if they make your asthma worse. For other triggers, keeping your home clean, dry and comfortable can help.

Figure out which triggers make your asthma worse and then start by keeping them out of the area where you sleep. As you learn more, try getting rid of triggers throughout your home.

Your asthma

Talk to your doctor about an asthma action plan. Your asthma action plan will tell you how and when to take your asthma medicines.

Know what steps to take every day and what steps to take when your asthma gets worse. Look over the **Key Questions** with your doctor and make sure you understand how you can stay in control of your asthma.

Steps for reducing common triggers

If your trigger is...



Pets with fur or feathers

First steps

Create a pet-free zone. Keep your pet off the furniture and out of the room where you sleep. Clean your home often. Wash your hands and face and change your clothes after playing with your pet.



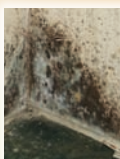
Pests (mice, rats, cockroaches)

Don't give pests food, water or places to hide. Put away food and clean up spills right away. Remove garbage and store it outside in a garbage can with a lid. Fix leaks and seal cracks in floors, walls and ceilings. Reduce clutter.



Dust

Stop dust from building up, even in places where you can't see it (like your bed). Stop dust from building up by getting rid of clutter and keeping your home clean. Wash bedding regularly in hot water. Choose stuffed toys that are washable and wash them often in hot water.



Mold

Keep your home clean and dry. Mold needs water to grow. Fix leaks and remove standing water as fast as you can. Open windows or use fans to stop steam from building up in the kitchen and bathroom. Wash your hands and face, and change your clothes after cleaning up mold, raking leaves or cutting grass.



Smoke

Don't smoke anything and stay away from smoke. Make your car and home smoke-free.



Cleaning, paint and smelly products

Keep strong smells out of your home. If odors are bothering your asthma, leave the area until the odors go away or try to get them out by turning on exhaust fans or opening windows. Try to stay away from perfumes, candles and air fresheners. If you must use smelly products, follow label instructions and use as little as possible.



Weather and outdoor air

Listen to your local weather report because sometimes the temperature or the air quality outside can cause problems for people with asthma. When it is very cold, try to stay inside somewhere warm or cover your mouth with a scarf when you are outside. When it is very hot, try to stay inside somewhere cool. If you go outside, try to stay out of the heat and don't exercise or work hard.



Colds and flu

Try your best to avoid getting sick. Wash your hands often. Try not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth. Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor for an asthma action plan so that you know what steps to take if you do get sick.

If it's still a problem

Keep your pet outside whenever you can or consider finding another home for your pet. If you plan to get a pet, choose one that doesn't have fur or feathers.

Try not to use sprays, "bug bombs" or other products that have harmful chemicals. Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension or your local health department to find out ways to get rid of pests safely. If you have to use chemicals, follow label directions carefully.

See if someone else can do some of the cleaning. Consider buying special mattress and pillow cases for people with asthma or allergies. These are sold at stores that sell bedding. See if you can remove some of your curtains or carpets, which can trap dust. Floors and shades with smooth surfaces may be easier to clean.

Remove or replace moldy materials that can't be cleaned. Have someone else clean up existing mold, rake leaves and cut the grass. Contact your local health department if mold is a big problem that you can't clean up yourself.

Get help if you or a family member is having trouble quitting. It's free to call the Smoker's Quitline: (866) 697-8487

Don't touch or breathe in chemicals when they are being used. Ask someone else to clean, paint or apply chemicals for you. Don't be afraid to ask people to stop using perfumes, candles or air fresheners if they are bothering your asthma.

Talk to your doctor and have a plan for days when the temperature or air quality might cause problems for your asthma. Be prepared with your medication and know what steps to take if your asthma starts to get worse.

If you do get sick, be prepared with your medication and follow the steps on your asthma action plan. Pay close attention to your asthma and call your doctor if you need help.



Key Questions

Here are some ideas to talk about with your doctor. Tear this off and take it to your next asthma checkup.

What do I need to know?

What is asthma?
What makes my asthma worse?
Can I tell if an asthma attack is coming?
Will I always have asthma?

How can I keep my asthma under control?

How and when should I take my asthma medicines?
What kinds of asthma medicines am I taking (quick relief, controller, etc)?
What can I do at home, at work or school to make my asthma better?
Do I have to limit any of my activities?
When should I get help from a doctor or hospital for my asthma?
How often should I see my doctor for asthma check-ups?

Why will this help me?

Why do I need to keep away from my asthma triggers?
Why is it important to take my medicines the right way?
What can I expect to happen if I do all, or most, of these things?
What can I expect to happen if I don't?