**Reducing Allergy and Asthma Triggers in the Home**

Seasonal allergies have become even more worrisome for some during the COVID19 pandemic. More specifically those with allergy symptoms such as a dry cough or trouble breathing can cause alarm. In general, seasonal allergy symptoms tend to include a runny nose, itchy/watery eyes, nasal congestion, and a dry cough. For some, allergy induced asthma attack symptoms are even more frightening. Difficulty breathing, tightness in the chest, shortness of breath and/or wheezing are just some of the symptoms reported with asthma attacks. In contrast, COVID19 symptoms include fever, body aches, very sore throat, fatigue, trouble breathing, dry cough and gastrointestinal problems.

In order to reduce the frequency and severity of asthma and allergy attacks, understanding and controlling common triggers in the home can be very useful. Control begins with learning which trigger factors affect your health. Since no two people are alike, it is important to consider a wide range of trigger factors. Allergic reactions to allergens are common triggers for asthma. Some common allergens in the home are pollen, mold, animal dander, feathers, dust, food, and cockroaches. If one can avoid being exposed to trigger factors, he or she may still have asthma, but the severity will likely be lessened. A list of common asthma and allergy triggers are listed below:

•Tobacco Smoke or Wood Smoke –Do not allow smoking inside your home. Wood-burning fireplaces may be a trigger.

•Excessive Moisture -Use an exhaust fan over the range to remove moisture, sulfur oxides, nitrogen oxides, and cooking odors.

•Dust Mites -Clean regularly. Wash bedding materials weekly or more often if needed. Vacuum and wet mop hard-surface flooring often to reduce dust mites and pollen. If dust mites are an allergen for you; carpet, knick-knacks, stuffed animal, open shelves, and other dust-collecting items may have to be removed from sleeping areas.

•Dust -Clean blinds, ceiling fans, and filters on a regular basis.

•Pollen -Keep washable rugs at all entrances. Wash them weekly. Keep windows closed during high pollen seasons.

•Excessive Moisture and Mold -Control moisture to control mold growth. Keep in-home humidity levels low (40-50% relative humidity). Repair all leaks and drips.

•Pets -If you have pets, wash and brush them weekly to remove pollen, animal dander, hair, dust, etc. Keep pets away from sleeping areas. It may be necessary to keep pets outdoors if asthma is triggered by them.

•Pests -Roaches and rodents can trigger asthma and allergies. They need food, water, warmth, and shelter to survive. You can control roaches, mice, and other pests by making these things hard get. Store food in tightly concealed containers. Clean up crumbs and spills right away. Empty your garbage often. Wash your dirty dishes right after eating. Do not leave out pet food or water overnight. Seal cracks where roaches and other bugs hide or get into your home.

Source: Tips for Reducing Asthma Triggers in Indoor Environments Fact Sheet-Janie Harris, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Specialist