

If Your Child Has Asthma

If your child has asthma it doesn't mean your home is dirty; but, it could mean that your child might react to asthma "triggers" in your home.

One of the trickiest parts about asthma and allergies is that most of the "triggers" — like the tiny airborne particles (allergens) that can set off an asthma episode — are hidden. But these triggers can be life threatening for the millions of asthma sufferers in the United States.

Asthma is on the rise! In fact, in the U.S., it affects more than one child in 20 and accounts for nearly 10 million lost school days per year. For adults, asthma is the fourth leading cause of work loss, resulting in nine million lost workdays in the U.S. each year. Alarming, by the year 2020, an estimated 29 million Americans will have asthma.

Top 5 Most Common Allergens: Most of them are hidden — in fact, they can be found in a home that looks spotless!

- Dust mites
- Animal dander (skin flakes and saliva)
- Cockroaches and their droppings
- Mold and mildew
- Pollen (from outside)

How to control the Triggers:

Start with an Allergen Control Plan...

- Work with your regular doctor or clinic to figure out which allergens affect your child the most.
- Concentrate on controlling those allergens.
- Start with the easiest, least expensive options, like working to remove "triggers" in the home—especially the ones that most affect your child.

Put your plan into action:

--Set up your room-by-room cleaning plan — starting where the asthma-sufferer sleeps.

- Wash bedding and curtains
- Dust and vacuum
- Clean windowsills and frames
- Wet mop floors
- Remove stuffed animals (or enclose them in a cabinet)

Learn as much as you can about asthma:

- Ask your doctor or clinic for asthma education information
- Join an asthma support group. Studies show they can really help you set and reach your goals
- Keep an asthma diary to track asthma episodes
- Work with your doctor or clinic to determine what other steps you need to take —

such as removing carpeting from your home.

If you have a family member who suffers from asthma, keeping your home clean is essential. To share this responsibility, make cleaning a family affair! By involving the whole family, cleaning can be done in less time, with more efficient results, says The Soap and Detergent Association. Start with these fun ideas:

- Create a family calendar: Make a list of the tasks to be done. Then assign days for completing them. Decorate the calendar with funny notes or cut-outs from magazines.
- Have a badge bowl so family members can randomly “draw” their own cleaning assignments for the week.
- Create pin-on job badges with whimsical titles like “Captain Clutter”, “Super Sweeper,” “Vacuum Patrol,” and “Deputy Duster.” Have family members wear the badges as they clean.
- Set a timer and have the family gather to report their progress when the timer goes off.
- Reward the gang for a job well done with favorite drinks, pizza, or ice cream.

Shelia Lewis is a Smith County Extension agent in family and consumer sciences. She can be reached at 903/535-0885 or via e-mail at sk-lewis@tamu.edu.

Educational information/programs of Texas Cooperative Extension are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age or national origin.