

# HealthMatters

AN EVERSIDE HEALTH & WELLNESS RESOURCE | 2022



**Allergy and asthma symptoms are triggered by breathing in substances called allergens, or triggers.**

Knowing and avoiding your triggers are steps toward feeling better.

## Allergies and asthma

### What are allergies?

Allergies are a chronic condition that occur when the immune system, designed to protect the body from potentially harmful threats, is introduced to a foreign irritant and overreacts by producing antibodies.

Your immune system responds to these allergens by trying to fight them off like a germ or virus.

#### Symptoms may include:

- Skin and eye irritation
- Sneezing/nasal congestion
- Difficulty breathing/wheezing

These symptoms may be experienced more with seasonal changes, different environments, foods consumed, and certain products used or exposed to the body such as smoking and second-hand cigarette smoke.

### Did you know?

**In the United States, 17.7 million adults (7% of adults) and 6.3 million children (9% of children) have asthma**

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that causes inflammation and constricts airways. It leads to coughing and trouble breathing as airflow to the lungs is reduced.

Asthma is influenced by multiple factors including genetics, diet, infections and the environment including seasonal changes, smoking and air pollution.

### The allergy/asthma relationship

Allergies and asthma are two separate health conditions. Not everyone with allergies has asthma, and vice versa.

“Allergy-induced asthma” occurs when an allergic reaction affects the lungs and airways, leading to asthma symptoms.

Allergens such as pollen, dust and pet dander can trigger asthma symptoms and asthma attacks in certain people.

#### Two types of asthma:

- **Allergic:** triggers may include exposure to an allergen, such as mold or pet dander.
- **Non-allergic:** triggers may include stress, overexertion, illness, extreme weather and, irritants in the air.

*Make your home a smoke-free zone. If you have allergies or asthma, people should never smoke near you, in your home, in your car or wherever you may spend a lot of time.*

**Contact your Everside Health provider today to learn more.**  
Your provider can recommend allergen tests and treatments.

# Allergies and asthma...

## What can be done?

### Inside triggers

With the warmer weather approaching, spring cleaning is on many household “to do” lists. This can become more of a challenge than a chore when dealing with allergies and asthma.

Research studies have shown that exposure to certain allergens such as dust mites, animal pet dander, rodent and pest residue and mold or fungus is a risk factor for asthma.

### Spring into action!

- Use HEPA furnace filters and replace every 90 days to reduce the number of allergens in your home.
- Keep relative humidity levels low, around 30-50%, to discourage mold growth and reduce dust mites. Use a simple humidity meter to monitor levels.

### Dust and vacuum regularly

- Vacuum and sweep floors weekly to help reduce dust mites and pet dander (avoid wall-to-wall carpeting if possible).
- Use a microfiber or electrostatic cloth to dust
- Wear a mask to help prevent inhaling dust or allergens.

### Change bedding often

- Wash bedding once a week using the “hot” setting and consider encasing mattresses, box springs and pillows with allergen-proof covers.

### Avoid pet allergens

- Keep your pet clean/bathed regularly, wash hands with soap and water after handling pets and keep pets out of bedrooms/off furniture to reduce allergens.

**In case of a flare-up, remember to keep quick-relief allergy or asthma medicine on hand. Always be sure to use preventive or controller medications as prescribed.**

#### Sources:

[Climate Changes, Allergies and Asthma | American Public Health Association](#), accessed 01/27/2022

[Allergies and asthma: They often occur together | Mayo Clinic](#), accessed 01/27/2022

[The Role of Allergen Exposure and Avoidance in Asthma | PMC](#), accessed 01/27/2022

[Care for Your Air: A Guide to Indoor Air Quality | EPA](#), accessed 2/10/2022

[Seasonal Allergies: Nip them in the Bud | Mayo Clinic](#), accessed 2/10/2022

### Outside triggers

As flowers, weeds, trees, grass and other plants begin to bloom, pollen begins to release into the air. Recent studies have shown that exposure to pollen has been associated with seasonal asthma.

Allergic reactions can cause symptoms in the eyes, ears, nose, sinuses, throat and lungs. These may trigger symptoms of asthma causing difficulty in breathing. Temperature changes and air pollution can also worsen symptoms.

### Plan for the environment

- Check your local TV or radio station, or your local newspaper for pollen forecasts and current pollen levels.
- Consider outside activities during the early morning or evening when the air quality index/pollen count is lower.
- Keep windows closed to keep pollen and air pollutants out.
- Consider wearing a mask to avoid breathing in allergens.
- Choose unscented bug spray or sunscreen lotions instead of aerosol sprays.
- Wash exposed skin and clothes when returning from outdoors.
- Check the local air quality index.

*Did you know? | Air Quality Index levels above 50 may pose a threat to people with asthma or allergies*

### Want to learn more?

Contact your Everside Health provider for more information and to discuss ways to improve your health.