

SUNSHINE MEDICAL CLINIC
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ALLERGIES & ASTHMA

Asthma and Allergies are problems faced by children all year round. A check off list for smoke and dust precautions and regular checkups with the physician, can be life saving for Asthmatics.

We have all by now, heard about the many bad effects of passive smoke. Children especially, are prone to developing wheezing, coughing, sneezing and other allergy like symptoms, if adults smoke around them. Ear infections and Bronchitis are also more common in children from families of smokers. So it is important for smokers to consider the side effect of their smoking not only on themselves, but also on their children. The best situation is when adults can quit smoking, but during this process they need to go outside to smoke, like in the garage, or on the porch, smoking in another room in the same house is of no use. Also remember never to smoke in the car when riding with the kids.

Other sources of smoke in the house, like a wood burn stove, a fireplace or incense sticks, should be avoided in a family with an asthmatic.

Dust is a big culprit in our environment, that causes irritation of airways and thus leads to asthma exacerbations. All items that collect dust in the house should be replaced.

Carpets should be replaced with blinds, which can be kept clean with a wet cloth.

Fabric upholstery on the furniture, should be replaced with vinyl or leather, which can be wet dusted often.

Large fluffy pillows and stuffed toys gather a lot of dust and are best kept out of the bedroom.

Furry pets like dogs and cats can cause allergy symptoms not only by the nature of their hair, but also by shedding animal dander on the furniture and carpets, that can take months to get rid of.

If these changes are not possible all over the house, they should at least be carried out in the room of the person with asthma. This is the room in which they spend 8-10 hours every night and at least some part of the day.

Most people with Asthma are allergic to Dust mites. These are microscopic bugs that thrive on shed human skin. They are commonly found in mattresses, pillows and beddings. Large vinyl case for covering mattresses, box springs and pillows, are available in standard sizes in most department stores. These are zippered covers, that completely enclose the bed, so that Dust mites have no access to the airway of the Asthmatic. The bed sheets, pillow covers, blankets, comforters, etc. need to be washed in hot water frequently.

Regular changing of air filters on the air conditioning units keeps most of the dust and pollen out.

Pollen count is heaviest in the early morning hours, so a person with grass or tree pollen allergy should stay indoors during these hours. The best time to be outdoors is right after rainfall, as the rain helps to settle down the dust and pollen.

Routine checkups with the regular physician serve a dual purpose. A doctor can evaluate the patient's baseline lung function and then on follow up visits, can assess any signs of impending or active asthma problems. A doctor is also a good source for education regarding the disease. He/she will advise the patient about the disease, the precipitating factors, avoidance measures, signs of danger and adequate use of medication. There are several preventive medications for Asthma that if used regularly can prevent asthma attacks, and there are others which are used during an Asthma attack.

Flu shots during the late fall, early winter, are a must for Asthmatics, because Flu can precipitate or worsen Asthma.

Using only one pharmacy which is equipped with a computer tracking system can be a life saver as medications for Asthma can interfere with Antibiotics, allergy and blood pressure medicines. Wearing an armband, displaying a diagnosis of Asthma and the medications taken, is a wise precaution.

Do not take Asthma lightly. If well treated, it does not interfere with the patient's lifestyle—as we know, most of our track and water Olympic athletes are Asthmatics. But if neglected, Asthma has been known to take many precious lives.