



When to Stop due to Asthma

Spring is here and millions of Americans are outside enjoying the beautiful weather. But for many, this season not only brings sunny skies and chirping birds, but triggers of asthma as well.

Asthma affects more than 17 million Americans. Spring can accelerate triggers and irritants that may have been dormant during the winter season. Symptoms of asthma that can develop include coughing, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing.

RED LIGHT : Triggers and Irritants

Knowing what triggers your asthma can be a big help in minimizing your symptoms and help you on your way towards effective management. Triggers can include:

- Allergens: these are substances that cause allergies. Asthma can be triggered by allergens. Pollens and molds, animal dander, dust mite, indoor molds are common allergens.
- Viral or Sinus Infections: these can irritate your airways, often causing asthma flare-ups.
- Exercise: breathing through your mouth, inhaling cold and dry air and prolonged strenuous activities can increase your chances of exercise-induced asthma.
- Medications or Foods: ingredients in certain medications as well as foods may initiate an asthma attack. Consult with your physician at the Asthma and Allergy Center if you think this may be one of your triggers.

Asthma can also be triggered by specific irritants. These irritants would not trigger your allergies, but aggravate the nose and airways instead. Cigarette smoke is the most common trigger and should be avoided. Other irritants are:

- Air Pollutants: smoke and chemicals in the air and ozone.
- Occupational exposures: vapors, dust, gases or fumes at work.
- Strong odors: perfumes, household cleaners, cooking fumes, paints and varnishes
- Airborne particles: coat dust, chalk dust or talcum powder
- Changing weather conditions: changes in temperature, humidity, barometric pressure or strong winds.

Yellow Light: Managing Your Asthma

Asthma requires continuous management in order to keep it under control. Asthma treatment should include the following:

- Lung Function: using your peak flow meter to assess the severity of asthma.

- Environmental control measures: knowing to avoid factors in the RED LIGHT section.
- Patient Education: having a relationship with your physician is important to understand which methods of management will work for you.
- Medication is also a step in properly managing asthma. Your physician can assess your symptoms and prescribe the correct dosage and medication for you if necessary. Some medication treatments include:
 - Anti-inflammatories: these stop the development of inflammation as well as prevent it.
 - Corticosteroids: commonly used in inhaled or oral medications.

GREEN LIGHT: Understanding Your Asthma

In order to get to the GREEN LIGHT stage of asthma, it is important to understand your symptoms. Understanding your condition as well as recognizing your triggers can be valuable when working out a management plan. Staying educated about your condition and knowing how to properly manage your symptoms are key in avoiding a severe reaction.

If you suspect you have asthma, consult with an allergist/immunologist at the Asthma and Allergy Center

Adapted from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology