

# HEALTHY HOME GUIDE FOR HOMEOWNERS



There are lots of things inside your home that can cause poor air quality and make your asthma and/or allergy symptoms worse, and even increase your risk of developing asthma in the first place. This checklist will help you keep your home as healthy as possible.

## TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

**An air purifier with a HEPA filter is a great place to start** and can help with symptoms caused by cooking emissions, mould, fine particulate matter, airborne viruses and pets. Just be sure to avoid air filters with an ionizing function as these can actually worsen asthma symptoms!

**Aim to keep your home's humidity level between 30 and 60%.**

Higher levels of humidity can lead to an increase in mould, damp and mildew. Dust mites also thrive in humid environments. Humidity monitors, called hygrometers, are an affordable and readily available way to keep track.

**To reduce humidity in your home:**

- Purchase a dehumidifier or use the dry option on your reverse-cycle air conditioner or heat pump.
- Use exhaust fans in the bathroom, laundry and kitchen.
- Close windows and doors when humidity outside is high.
- During periods of drier weather, open windows to help keep moisture away.



## DUST MITES

The waste of dust mites are a common trigger of allergy and asthma symptoms.

- |                          |  |    |
|--------------------------|--|----|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Purchase/use a HEPA vacuum or wet vacuum on carpets/floors                           | \$ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Remove carpets or soft furnishings that trap dust mites                              | \$ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Replace old bedding and consider buying dust mite-proof covers                       | \$ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wash bedding in 65°C water   |    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Wash curtains, cushions and couch covers regularly                                   |    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Declutter bedrooms and living room - try using plastic tubs for storage              |    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Regularly air rooms to lower humidity and use your HEPA air purifier if you have one |    |



## GAS EMISSIONS

Burning gas for indoor heating or cooking creates emissions including nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. Gas emissions are linked to developing or triggering asthma.

- Consider switching to an induction or electric stove \$
- Use a rangehood that vents to the outside when cooking if you have one, and if you don't consider switching to one that does \$
- Clean filters of exhaust fans and rangehoods regularly
- Open windows or doors when cooking, especially if you don't have an exhaust fan that vents to the outside
- Purchase/use electric cooking appliances such as portable induction cooktops, air fryers, pressure cookers and electric fry pans to minimise gas cooking (be sure to use these appliances near your rangehood to remove any pollution and/or use a HEPA air purifier if you have one) \$
- Consider electric heating and switch to reverse-cycle air conditioning or a heat pump if possible \$
- If you have a flued gas heater, make sure it is well maintained \$
- Consider investing in solar panels to help power electric appliances \$

## ☪☪☪ FUMES/ODOURS

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) can trigger asthma and allergy symptoms. They can be found in things such as new furniture, carpet, fresh paint, cleaning products and tobacco smoke.

- Avoid using products with fragrances or strong odours inside your home
- Open windows or doors for better ventilation, especially if you have new furniture, carpets or paint
- Opt for natural fragrances (eg. citrus sprays) instead of artificial air fresheners
- Use natural pest control methods
- Wash new clothes, soft toys, blankets and towels before using them for the first time
- Choose cleaning products that are low in chemicals like diluted vinegar and fragrance-free laundry detergent \$



## OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution can trigger asthma symptoms or asthma flare-ups. Some air pollutants can cause people to develop asthma over time. Air pollution can be created from smoke from wood heaters, bushfires, pollution from vehicles or factories, pollen, dust, and ozone.

- Seal any gaps around windows and doors \$
- Purchase door draught stoppers - this will also help with certain pests \$
- Purchase/use an air purifier with a HEPA filter \$



## MOULD

Mould releases millions of spores into the air. Breathing in mould spores can irritate the airways triggering allergy. This can lead to asthma flare-ups and other health problems.

- Purchase/use moisture absorbers or a dehumidifier \$
- Air your home - especially wet rooms - by opening windows when it's drier outside
- Use extractor fans throughout your shower, not just at the end
- Avoid drying clothes inside or use a dehumidifier if not possible
- Use the dry setting on your air conditioner or heat pump, if you have one
- Look in and behind cupboards, wall hangings and furniture for hidden mould or mildew
- Clean mouldy surfaces with a combination of vinegar and water or wash mouldy belongings in hot soapy water – make sure you wear protective clothing or ask someone to do the cleaning for you if mould triggers your asthma or allergy symptoms
- Discard mouldy belongings that can't be cleaned \$
- Consider engaging professional help to remove stubborn mould \$
- Purchase/use an air purifier with a HEPA filter \$



## SMOKING/VAPING

If you smoke, vape or inhale other people's cigarette smoke (passive smoking) it can worsen your asthma.

- Quit smoking/vaping and support other household members and visitors to do the same
- If you're struggling to quit, be sure to smoke or vape outside, away from others and make sure smoke doesn't blow inside
- If purchasing secondhand furniture, check it is from a smoke-free home
- Purchase/use an air purifier with a HEPA filter \$



## PESTS

Some pests especially cockroaches and mice can cause allergy and asthma symptoms.

- If your home doesn't have window screens, install flyscreens on windows and doors \$
- Consider an annual pest control treatment \$
- Regularly vacuum and mop floors
- Keep benchtops free from crumbs and store food in sealed containers
- Check under dishwashers and in cupboards for droppings
- Take out the garbage and recycling regularly
- Use natural pest control products or methods (traps, baits etc)



## PETS

Some pets can cause allergy leading to asthma flare-ups. The allergy is from the flakes of skin or dander, feather dust, saliva, sweat or waste of your pets.

- When purchasing a property, check the house's pet history with the real estate agent and ensure carpets and curtains/fabric blinds are professionally cleaned – be sure to air the house out for a few days before moving in
- Wash hands after handling pets
- Keep pets out of bedrooms or create pet-free zones
- Regularly wash pet bedding and toys
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter or wet cleaning function
- Consider cleaning products and appliances especially for pet hair \$
- If purchasing second-hand items, check they are from pet-free homes

Find out how to create a healthier home at [asthma.org.au](https://asthma.org.au)