



Managing Asthma In Allergy Season



Say goodbye to frigid temperatures. Spring is in the air! With fresh leaves, green grass, and blossoming flowers, springtime provides warmer weather and an opportunity to enjoy spending time outdoors. However, with all its beauty, springtime can cause problems for people with asthma.

Asthma and allergy symptoms can change with the seasons. Spring brings an abundance of weed, tree, and grass pollens, which are carried by the wind and easily inhaled into the respiratory tract, triggering asthma and allergy symptoms. In addition, springtime can bring increased rainfall, which can result in the development of mold in your home or apartment. Be on the lookout for any water damage or leaks that arise and address issues quickly to avoid mold. Another place to be aware of mold is outdoors. Mold can be found in shady or damp areas and on leaves or in cut grass.

Remember the importance of this seasonal change. Enjoy the spring, but take precautions to keep your asthma under control. Here are a few helpful tips:

- Take all your prescribed medication.
- Vacuum and dust your house's flat surfaces frequently.
- Pay attention to pollen and mold counts. This information is reported by many local TV and radio stations during the spring and summer and can be found online anytime at weather.com. When pollen or mold counts are high, you may want to limit your activity outdoors or stay inside.

Spring Cleaning: Asthma-Friendly Products



In nature, spring brings rebirth and renewal. Maybe that is why spring cleaning is so popular, providing the opportunity to remove the old winter blues from your home and start fresh. It is also a great opportunity for individuals with allergy and asthma to remove dust, dirt, and allergens that have collected over the winter months.

As beneficial as a deep clean is, it can also trigger asthma symptoms. However, this can be avoided. When washing surfaces, use a damp rag or mop. This will avoid stirring up dust into the air. Most importantly, avoid using bleach or other harsh cleaners. There are many inexpensive, natural cleaning products in the home that get the job done—without causing asthma flare-ups.

Get ready! A good spring cleaning can not only clear out the clutter and confusion in life, but your family will likely reap the benefits of cleaner air and less indoor allergens. Spring cleaning is a great opportunity to remove asthma triggers from your home. Below are some green cleaning tips that will not only make spring cleaning easy, but safe for you and your family.

Recipes adapted from SimpleGreen.com:

Moldy walls: Spray vinegar on the affected areas. After about 15 minutes, rinse and let dry thoroughly. Vinegar is a disinfectant. It can stop the growth of mold, mildew, and some bacteria.

Drains: Clean drains—and the pipes they're attached to—by pouring vinegar down them. After 30 minutes, flush with cold water.

Floors: Add ¼ cup vinegar to a bucket of warm water to clean linoleum, vinyl, tile, and laminate flooring. For wood floors, use Murphy's Oil Soap instead.

Laundry: To brighten whites, instead of using bleach, add 1/2 cup lemon juice to the rinse cycle for a normal-size load. (Note: Lemon can be a great cleaning product. The acid in lemon removes dirt and rust).

ABOUT HEALTHY HOME, HEALTHY CHILD:

The program's goal is to reduce asthma-related morbidity and mortality and improve quality of life, via meaningful collaborations with the community.

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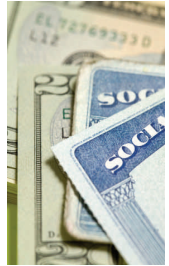
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Applying for SSI Benefits

Although there is no cure for asthma, most people with asthma can control it with proper medication and the reduction of triggers in their home environment. For a very few people, asthma can be so severe it remains uncontrolled despite strong efforts to manage it. Consult with your physician and/or Community Health Worker if your child's asthma remains uncontrolled. In these rare cases, individuals can apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

SSI is a federal government program that provides monthly payments to low income families of blind or disabled children, in addition to adults and senior citizens. For 2011, the maximum amount of a disability payment for an individual is \$674 per month. These benefits can be very important to low-income families who have children with severe and disabling asthma. Parents often pay for medications, co-pays at doctor visits and for medications, nebulizers, and other asthma treatment devices. They also have difficulty maintaining constant employment because they are called to school to take their child home, or spend nights in the emergency room. SSI gives these families the stability to afford rent and other basic needs, and allows them to be available to their child without fearing homelessness and helplessness. Benefits can help reduce stress for the family and the child that can be reflected in the child's overall health.



There are some very specific requirements for a child to apply for SSI benefits. The easiest way for a child with asthma to receive SSI benefits under the government listing is to show that the child had at least six emergency room visits (or three hospitalizations) in a year due to asthma. Children whose constant wheezing is described in school or medical records and who have been prescribed short courses of steroids (such as Prednisone) that average more than five days per month for at least three months in a year also meet government requirements. Sometimes, the Social Security Administration requires that a phone call or doctor visit be associated with these prescriptions. By using this kind of information, Healthy Home Healthy Child partners, attorneys at Health & Disability Advocates, recently secured government benefits for three children with very severe, chronic asthma.

Good, detailed records are the key to successful SSI cases. Many times medical records are not thorough. Sometimes asthma is not mentioned in the medical records even though it is the actual reason for treatment. For example, a child may have bronchitis which triggers asthma, but if bronchitis is listed as the primary diagnosis, it will not count for purposes of determining disability. Accordingly, it is very important to make sure that medical records and medication information are detailed and that the doctor documents asthma as the main diagnosis.

For children's cases, applying for disability is a long and involved process. After the initial application, it may take two years before benefits are awarded. Generally, 65% of cases are denied after the initial application, and, for individuals who appeal the denial, 85% are denied a second time. Parents who can provide sufficient proof of required information on the SSI application may win cases, yet the majority of cases will require a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. If a disability claim gets to the hearing stage, the family will want legal assistance. If the case makes it to the hearing stage and the family is represented, the odds of success are approximately 65%.

While SSI benefits can assist a family with its economic needs, a healthy child with well-controlled asthma should be the most important priority. Breathe well– Live well!

Westside Children's
Asthma Partnership:



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