

# Asthma Environmental Triggers in the Home



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**Asthma** is a chronic, inflammatory disease that affects the lungs, causing airways to narrow and swell, making breathing difficult. Asthma symptoms may include repeated episodes of wheezing, chest tightness, shortness of breath, and nighttime or early morning coughing.<sup>1</sup>

As one of the most common long-term diseases in the United States, asthma affects people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities. In Indiana, approximately 9.6%, or 1 in 10 adults, have a diagnosis of asthma. Additionally, 6.0%, or 1 in 16 Indiana children have asthma.<sup>2</sup>

Asthma can be severe and even life-threatening if not well-controlled. People with asthma experience inflammation of the airways, causing them to be more reactive and sensitive to irritants and triggers. Because Americans are spending more time indoors (about 90% of their time<sup>3</sup>), it is important to know common environmental triggers that can be found in the home.

## Environmental Triggers Found in Indiana Homes 2018<sup>4</sup>

### Adults who responded 'Yes'

- In the past 30 days, has anyone seen a cockroach inside your home?
- In the past 30 days, has anyone seen mice or rats inside your home?
- In the past 30 days, has anyone seen or smelled mold or a musty odor inside your home?
- Does your household have pets such as dogs, cats, hamsters, birds, or other feathered or furry pets that spend time indoors?
- Are pets allowed in your bedroom?
- In the past week, has anyone smoked inside your home?

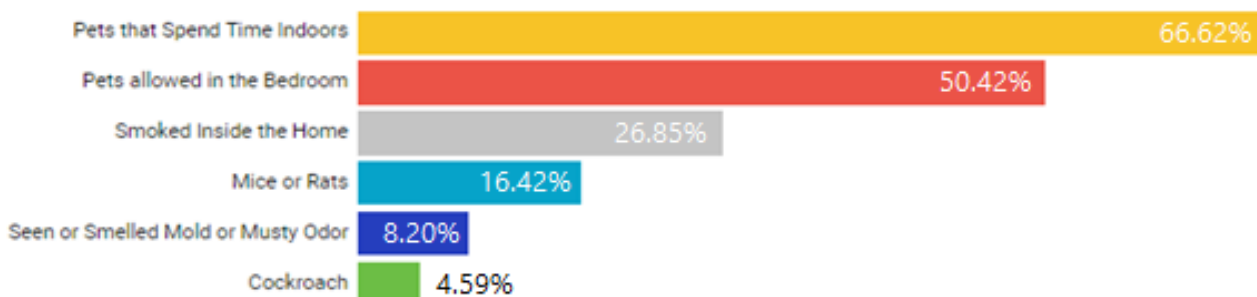


Chart: IDOH Chronic Respiratory Disease Section • Source: Indiana BRFSS Asthma Call-Back Survey • Created with Datawrapper

## Common Triggers Found in the Home

- Furry & Feathered Pets
- Dust Mites
- Cockroaches & Rodents
- Molds
- Tobacco Smoke
- Wood Smoke
- Nitrogen Dioxide from Gas Stoves
- Chemical Irritants

**33%** of Indiana residents

Reported being advised by a health professional to change things in their home, school or work environment to improve asthma.<sup>4</sup>

# Environmental Trigger Management<sup>3</sup>

Adults and children with asthma, their families, and caregivers can reduce the amount of environmental triggers they are exposed to in the home by:

- Regularly using an air cleaner or purifier
- Using a dehumidifier to prevent mold growth
- Using mattress and pillow covers to prevent exposure to dust mites
- Washing sheets and pillowcases in hot water
- Vacuuming regularly with a HEPA filter vacuum
- Not allowing pets in bedrooms to reduce exposure to pet dander
- Turning on exhaust fans when using a gas stove or oven, or while bathing in the bathroom

## Take Action: Steps You Can Take to Control Asthma

- Talk with your health care provider about your asthma symptoms, triggers, medication and side effects during routine medical visits.
- Identify and avoid asthma triggers that cause you symptoms or asthma “attacks.”
- Avoid using tobacco and being around others who do.
- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Work with your doctor to create an Asthma Action Plan - these plans include information about your daily treatment, medications, short and long-term control measures, as well as explains when to seek medical treatment.
- Ensure you always have immediate access to quick-relief medications.
- Encourage those around you, including your school, child care provider, or employer, to maintain asthma friendly environments.

## Helpful Resources

- Daily Air Quality Forecasts: [IDEM Smog Watch](#)
- Help with tobacco cessation: Indiana Tobacco Quitline, 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669), or [QuitNowIndiana.com](#)
- Find a Health Center: [Health Resources & Services Administration](#)
- IDOH Asthma Environmental Home Visit Program for patients whose care givers feel trigger identification and education would be beneficial. To request a home visit please contact the IDOH Asthma Program at [Idohasthma@isdh.in.gov](mailto:Idohasthma@isdh.in.gov), or complete the [Environmental Home Assessment Referral Form](#).

## References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/default.htm>
2. [Indiana Department of Health Data Analysis Team](#) [ISDH DAT]. (2021). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Prevalence Data, 2020*.
3. <https://www.epa.gov/asthma/asthma-triggers-gain-control>
4. [CDC and IDOH Data Analysis Team](#) (2021). *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Asthma Call-back Survey, 2018*.

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For additional information on Asthma and other Chronic Respiratory Diseases:

[www.Asthma.in.gov](http://www.Asthma.in.gov)

