

Asthma Triggers in the Car

Could your daily drive be triggering asthma episodes? Most people with asthma are challenged by symptoms brought on by common triggers lingering in the car.

Environmental allergens and irritants, such as smoke, dust, and fumes are triggers for over 60 percent of asthma attacks. The common environmental triggers for asthma are:

- **Allergens:** Pollens, Molds, Animal Dander, Dust Mites, Cockroaches, Foods
- **Irritants:** Vapors, Dust, Gases, Car Fumes, Fragrances, Chemicals, Cleaning Products, Smoke
- **Air pollutants:** Second-Hand Tobacco Smoke, Exhaust Fumes, Smoke from Fires, Particles in the Air, Dust.

Asthma Safe Car Steps

Traveling

- Travel in the early morning and late evening to steer clear of high air pollution levels and heavy idling traffic.
- Keep windows closed when driving to keep allergens and pollutants out.
- Use the air conditioner to keep the air cool and dry. Let the car air out 10 minutes before a road trip. You can do this by running the air conditioner/vent. This helps reduce the triggers trapped in the ventilation system and upholstery.
- For children, travel with asthma friendly toys www.asthmaandallergyfriendly.com
- Pack asthma-friendly snacks and avoid food allergens and sulfites when traveling.
- Do not stand behind idling cars to avoid breathing in exhaust fumes.
- Be sure to travel with asthma medication and supplies .

Car rules

- Do not allow smoking in the car or near the car.
- Avoid transporting animals (pets) in the car.
- Keep the windows and doors of the car shut to lower the buildup of dust and pollen.
- Avoid use of auto air fresheners.
- Avoid the use of sprays (including hairspray) and fragrances (including lotions) while in the car.
- Avoid letting trash pile up or linger in the car.
- Clean up food and drink spills immediately to avoid pests and mold growth.
- Never leave food, drinks, chemicals or toxins in the car for long periods. (Unload the car).

Weekly cleaning

- Clean the car interior weekly
- Wipe surfaces with non-toxic and fragrance-free cleaning products.
- Dust the car using a damp cloth
- Wash removable seat covers, floor mats, and child car seats regularly.
- Vacuum the car seats, floorboards, and upholstery with a vacuum fitted with a HEPA filter system.

Asthma Triggers in the Car: Second-Hand Smoke

Did you know second-hand smoke is one of the most common environmental triggers for an asthma episode?

Second-hand smoke, even in small amounts, is proven harmful to children and adults. It is a regular trigger of asthma episodes. "Adults may be around second-hand smoke at several places. For children, the most frequent second-hand smoke exposure is in the car and in the home. A top protection is to eliminate tobacco in the car and home.

Rules and Tips

Never allow smoking in the car or around the car.

If there is no smoking sign in the car, place a friendly reminder to guests and passengers.

Stop using the ashtray for coins. Instead collect coins. Clean the car at least once a week. Wipe surfaces with non-toxic cleaner or a damp cloth. Wash removable items

regularly. Vacuum the car frequently using a vacuum containing a filter.

For Smokers:

To protect children and those with asthma avoid smoking in the car at all times.

It is recommended that temporary craving prevention be used when traveling such as nicotine replacement patches, gum and sprays.

Remove cigarettes, tobacco and ashtrays from the car and vacuum the ashtray.

For assistance from the Tobacco Quit line at

Never smoking the best protection against second-hand tobacco in the car.

Can I just roll down the window while a person smokes in the car?

- Rolling down the window does not protect against second-hand tobacco smoke. Rolling down the window while a person smokes is not enough to lower the smoke in the car. Remember, a small amount of smoke is safe, especially for children, teens, and people with asthma.
- Keep in mind that often second-hand smoke is simply blown back into the car or it is blown out of the car. Usually chemicals float to the back of the car, usually where children and teens are sitting.
- Rolling down the window exposes those with asthma to more environmental triggers. The best bet is not to allow smoking in the car.

Is it safe to only smoke when children or those with asthma are not in the car?

- Not allowing smoking in the cars at all times is the safest protection you can offer.
- Second-hand smoke lingers in the air and settles on surfaces, seats, carpets in the car. This residue and air pollution is enough to trigger an asthma attack.

Is it okay to only smoke once in awhile?

- Since the space in a car or truck is small, second-hand smoke is more toxic. It is recommended to never smoke in the vehicle.
- Remember, smoke lingers especially in compact spaces and will settle on the surfaces, seats, and carpets. This is not healthy for anyone.
- Don't forget any amount of second-hand smoke is harmful to passengers.
- Second-hand smoke at any time can trigger an asthma episode or "attack."

Can't I just use car air freshener to hide the smoke smell?

- Second-hand smoke is harmful even when we can't see or smell it.
- Fragrances in the forms of sprays or hanging from the mirror only mask the smell of smoke. This does not take the smoke away. These fragrances add more asthma triggers into the car. The safest is to never allow smoking in the car to avoid asthma triggers.