

DRIVER'S SEAT

IT'S YOUR HEALTH. STAY IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT.®

IN VOLUME 30

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DID YOU KNOW?

Allergies affect **40 TO 50 MILLION PEOPLE** in the U.S.⁵

MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF PEOPLE with asthma also have allergies.⁶

More than 200,000 kids with asthma have **MORE SEVERE SYMPTOMS DUE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE.**⁵

Optimizing **VITAMIN D LEVELS** and getting **REGULAR EXERCISE** may also have a positive impact on asthma.⁷ Ask your doctor.

DON'T LET ALLERGIES, ASTHMA TAKE YOUR BREATH (OR \$\$) AWAY

Allergies and asthma affect one in four Americans,¹ and if you're that one, the winds of seasonal change can sweep great physical discomfort into your life. This issue of *Driver's Seat* offers some spring cleaning tips and more that'll help you breathe easier, control your condition and keep your cash at home.

IT'S NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT

From sneezing to wheezing, allergies and asthma can take a toll, both physically and financially. Every day in the U.S., 40,000 people miss school/work, 30,000 have an attack, 5,000 visit the ER, 1,000 are admitted to the hospital and 11 die with asthma.² Estimated annual costs for asthma alone total \$18 billion.³

Identify – and try to eliminate or stay away from – your triggers, which may include:

- **Strong odors** – Keep perfume, deodorizers, cleaning chemicals and paint to low levels.
- **Dust mites** – Wash bedding weekly in hot water. Remove bedroom carpeting. Put clothes in sealed plastic garment bags.
- **Indoor mold** – High humidity causes problems in the bathroom, kitchen and basement. Consider a dehumidifier. Check houseplants for mold.
- **Strong emotions** – Anxiety, crying, yelling or laughing hard can bring on an attack.
- **Use air-conditioning** – Closed doors and windows keep pollen and mold spores outside.
- **Medicines** – Aspirin, ibuprofen and beta blockers (for high blood pressure, migraines, glaucoma, etc.) can trigger asthma.
- **Vacuuming** – Your vacuum should have a high-efficiency filter, good suction and sealed construction – but leave the vacuuming to others.
- **Tobacco, air pollution** – Avoid smoking, wood stoves and fireplaces.
- **Pets** – Keep animals away from the bedroom and bathe them often.

TAKE OUR QUIZ

1. Asthma and allergies are hereditary.

TRUE / FALSE

2. A bathroom cabinet is a good place to keep medications.

TRUE / FALSE

3. During spring cleaning, you discover expired medicine. You should:

- A. Flush it down the toilet.
- B. Ask your pharmacist to dispose of it.
- C. Wrap it with duct tape and put in the trash.
- D. B. or C.

ANSWERS

1. True. Asthma seems to run in families and people also seem to inherit a tendency to develop allergies, although family history isn't necessarily an indication of allergy type.

2. False. Medicine will keep its full strength longer when stored in a cool, dry place with no direct light. The refrigerator, linen closet or a drawer are good options if they're safe from children and pets.

3. D. – B. or C. If you put expired medicine in the trash, before taping tightly, add water to pills to dissolve or add a strong spice to liquids to discourage tasting. Cross out all label information except for the drug name.



OTC OK?

Over-the-counter (OTC) allergy and asthma medications are available and often cost less than a prescription. If you have asthma, always consult your physician first, as OTC meds used incorrectly can lead to complications (e.g., higher blood pressure, stroke, heart attack or convulsions) that could result in greater long-term costs.

The annual cost of drug-related illnesses and deaths is estimated at more than **\$177 billion.**⁴ Common misuse includes taking the incorrect dose, missing doses and stopping medication too soon. Asthma medicines are usually inhaled, but inhalers are often used incorrectly. Ask your pharmacist or doctor to check your technique.

GET THEE TO AN ALLERGIST

Consider seeing an **allergist** or **immunologist** – physicians with additional training in the immune system and special skills in evaluating and treating these conditions. **Be sure to find out if you need a referral from your doctor, or if you can just make an appointment with a specialist.** Call the number on your ID card or check your policy for details. Visit the website listed on your ID card to find an allergist or immunologist in your area.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- aaaai.org – American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
- aafa.org – Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America



¹ CDC Fast Facts A-Z. Vital Health Statistics, 2003

² Annual U.S. Prevalence Statistics for Chronic Diseases, as cited by American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, aaaai.org

³ "The Costs of Asthma," Asthma and Allergy Foundation 1992 and 1998 study, 2000 update

⁴ Ernst, FR and Grizzle, AJ. "Drug-Related Morbidity and Mortality: Updating the Cost-of-Illness Model." *Journal of the American Pharmacists Association*: 2001; 41:192-199

⁵ National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), as cited at umm.edu/allergies/stats.htm

⁶ National Library of Medicine. Understanding Allergy and Asthma. National Institutes of Health

⁷ articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2009/04/04/Sure-Fire-Strategies-to-Help-Asthma-Naturally.aspx

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