UNC PHYSICIANS NETWORK
UNC HEALTH CARE
CAROLINA ADVANCED HEALTH

. Avoiding Allergy Triggers

What are allergy triggers?
Allergy triggers are anything that causes allergy symptoms or makes them worse.

Why do they matter?
One of the best ways to prevent and manage allergies is to avoid allergy triggers.

What are common triggers?
Seasonal pollens, dust, dust mites, mold, and animal dander are common triggers.

How can I avoid my triggers?
In general, for all triggers:

- avoid carpets
- use a cyclonic vacuum that spins dust away from the floor or a HEPA filter
- use central vacuuming or have others vacuum when you are not present
- change air conditioning and furnace filters every 3 months (use filters with a MERV rating of 8 to 12)

Pollens: (Spring=trees, Summer=grasses, Fall=weeds)

- stay indoors during mid-day and afternoon hours when pollen counts are highest
- use air conditioners or air purifiers
- keep car windows closed and use the car air conditioner
- wear protective glasses when outdoors
- after working or playing outdoors, take a shower, wash your hair, and change your clothes

Dust and dust mites:

- use a damp rag when dusting
- keep surfaces as free of dust as possible
- use an air purifier
- put dust-proof covers on sleeping surfaces (pillows, mattress, box springs), remove and clean frequently
- wash bedding in hot water (130°F) weekly
- avoid bedding stuffed with foam rubber
- limit stuffed animals in the bedroom

Mold: grows anywhere, especially in damp areas, places where fresh food is stored, refrigerator drip trays, house plants, air conditioners, humidifiers, garbage pails, mattresses, upholstered furniture, and old foam rubber pillows.

Adapted from the American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology website (www.acaai.org)

- Clean bathrooms, kitchens, and basements regularly (use a 5% bleach solution on visible mold)
- Do not use humidifiers
- Use dehumidifiers in damp areas (set humidity level between 25 and 50%)
- Fix leaky faucets and pipes
- Limit houseplants and dried flowers

Animal danders: (short-haired pets are no less likely than long-haired pets to cause allergies)

- if you must have a pet, keep it outside of main living areas, and out of your bedroom at all times
- wash your hands after petting
- bathe your pet weekly

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Irritants can also cause allergy flares.

- Smoke – If you smoke, quit. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home or car, and avoid second-hand smoke
- Odors – avoid strong perfume, hair spray, paint, cooking exhaust, cleaning products, and insecticides
- Cold air – cover your nose and mouth with a scarf or mask
- Cold and infections – wash your hands frequently
- Exhaust – do not run your car in an attached garage, fumes can leak into the house despite closed doors
- Chemicals – store insecticides, gas, and chemicals with strong odors in an area away from the home

For more information about allergies, visit the American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology website at www.acaai.org.

Thank you for visiting Carolina Advanced Health.

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To contact your provider by email, please visit our website at www.CarolinaAdvancedHealth.org ("Contact Us", then "Patient Request Tool").

To reach us by phone, please call (919)445-6000.

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