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NEWS RELEASE

Controlling Asthma Triggers

If you or someone you know has asthma or allergy symptoms, you may be able to breathe easier by finding your “triggers”. A trigger is anything that makes your asthma or allergy worse. Triggers are different for each person. Triggers can be found outdoors or indoors, at home, school or work. Common triggers include:

- Dust
- Pests such as mice, rats or cockroaches
- Tobacco smoke and wood smoke
- Pets with fur or feathers
- Cleaning solvents, paint, perfume or any strong odors or fumes
- Hot or cold weather or outdoor air pollution
- Colds and flu
- Mold

“You may be able to add more triggers to this list. Other things may also trigger your asthma or allergies. It's important to learn which triggers are problems for you and ask your healthcare provider to help,” said Susanne Smith Deputy Director of the Otsego County Department of Health. She may suggest that you:

- Keep a diary of where you are and what you are doing when your asthma or allergy gets worse.
- Try to keep triggers out of the house or the room where you sleep.
- Make an asthma action plan to be sure you know how and when to take your asthma medicines.

“Finding triggers isn't always easy. If you do know your triggers, cutting down exposure to them may help avoid asthma and allergy attacks,” Susanne Smith said.

“If you don't know your triggers, try to limit your exposure to one suspected trigger at a time. Doing this may show you if the trigger was a problem for you,” she said.

Here are some tips to reduce triggers in the home:

- Make your car and home smoke-free. Ask family members and friends to smoke outdoors if they must smoke. Get help if you or a family member is having a hard time quitting. It's free to call the New York State Smoker's Quitline at 866-NYQUITS (866-697-8487).
- Avoid wood stoves and fireplaces. Wood smoke can be a problem for children and adults with asthma and allergies.
- Create a pet-free zone. Keep pets off furniture and out of bedrooms. Wash your hands and face and change your clothes after playing with pets. Weekly pet baths may help cut down on the amount of pet saliva and dander in the home.

- Deal with cockroach infestations by taking away their food, water and hiding places. Put away food, clean up spills, fix leaks and seal cracks in floors, walls and ceilings. Dead roaches and roach droppings collect in house dust and may trigger asthma or allergy attacks. Keeping your home clean will help.
- Keep excess moisture down to control mold. Mold needs water to grow. Open windows or use fans to stop moisture from building up in bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. The basement in particular may need a dehumidifier. And remember, the water in the dehumidifier must be emptied and the container cleaned often to prevent forming mildew.
- Keep strong smells out of the home or at least stay out of the areas where they are being used. Perfume, room deodorizers, cleaning chemicals, paint, or candles can all be triggers.
- Stop dust from building up, even in places where you can't see it, like your bed. Wash bedding regularly in hot water. Get rid of clutter. Choose stuffed toys that are washable and wash them often in hot water.

In general, the best way to avoid triggers is to keep your home clean, dry and comfortable.

To learn more about controlling asthma, visit the New York State Department of Health web site at <http://www.nyhealth.gov/diseases/asthma>.

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