

Have an Asthma and Allergy Friendly Holiday

Freshly fallen snow, the smell of wood smoke wafting through the air, and reunions with loved ones can be magical. But for those living with asthma, holiday gatherings can bring increased exposure to asthma triggers. Here are some tips and tools to help you give the gift of an asthma and allergy friendly holiday to yourself and your loved ones this year.

Decorate with flameless candles

The soft glow of candlelight is a hallmark of the holiday season for many. What isn't very festive is that scented candles can trigger allergies and asthma symptoms in your guests. This year, make it glow with flameless candles, lanterns and lights instead. Here are [15 Beautiful Home Decorating Ideas with Flameless Candles](#) to spark your imagination.

Choose Healthy Cleaning Products

Getting the house ready for guests doesn't have to involve a lot of toxic chemicals. Fumes from cleaning products can trigger asthma symptoms and attacks and there is nothing welcoming about that! For help choosing safer cleaners, check out the [Environmental Working Group's \(EWG\) Guide to Healthy Cleaning](#). [EWG Guide to Healthy Cleaning Video](#) explains how the guide works.

Be mindful of dust on stored decorations

Holiday decorations are typically kept untouched in basements, attics, and closets between seasons. Dust that has collected on stored decorations can cause respiratory flare-ups for the many people with asthma who are sensitive to it. If possible, have someone without respiratory issues take these items out of storage, and wipe them off. If that is not an option, wear a disposable medical mask when taking out decorations.

Display synthetic versions of your favorite holiday plants

During the holidays, trees, wreaths, poinsettias, and holly make frequent appearances in our homes. While beautiful, the presence of these live plants can be difficult for those who are sensitive. Many synthetic variations can be just as lovely. If you are using synthetics that have been stored over the year, make sure that they have been kept covered and dry, as it is easy for these items to collect dust and mold, which can also be problematic for those with asthma.

Think carefully about wood smoke exposure

Wood stoves, pellet stoves, and forced air furnaces generate fine particles which can irritate the lungs, especially for those with asthma. Make any guests with breathing difficulties aware ahead of time if this is how you heat your home. If you have asthma and are visiting, check-in with your host ahead of time. Check out these [EPA Resources on Wood Smoke and Health](#) for more information about the do's and don'ts of wood burning.

Minimize exposure to tobacco smoke

In 2019, we all know that smoking is harmful, both to the smoker as well as to those around them. This harm is amplified for those with breathing difficulties, but steps can be taken to reduce exposure. When family and friends who smoke come to visit, have your guests smoke outdoors. Consider storing their jackets in an outdoor space or container to avoid triggers caused by third-hand smoke.

Be mindful of scents

Pine, gingerbread, and cinnamon are just some of the holiday-themed scents to be found in air fresheners, incense, candles and bathroom sprays this time of year. Artificial scents, while lovely to some, can make asthma symptoms worse. One alternative is to simmer natural ingredients like cloves, cinnamon and vanilla in water in a crockpot set on low. Refrain from wearing fragrances when you go visiting and ask friends and family to do the same.

Remember your inhaler

With the holiday rush and visiting lots of friends and family, managing a potential asthma attack might be the last thing on your mind. Make sure that your prescription is recent and filled, and don't forget to check your asthma action plan. Get a portable container where you can keep your, or your child's, medication, peak flowmeter, spacer, and plan. Label it with your name and phone number in case it is lost, and double check you have it with you when you set out on a holiday visit.

Love pets from afar

We all love our pets, but our cute critters' fur and dander (and in some cases their saliva), can be an irritant for those with asthma and allergy issues. Keep animals out of the room guests will sleep in and off of furniture guests will sit on. If possible, clean up hair and dander using a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Bathe and groom pets with non-scented products to remove dirt and excess hair before the arrival of guests.

Get a flu shot

Make sure that you and your loved ones receive your annual influenza vaccine. For people with asthma, the flu can be much worse than for those without asthma. Visit the [Bureau of Infectious Disease Control](#) website for information on the flu and where to get vaccinated.