

# Asthma and Allergy Triggers



## Chemical Irritants

Asthma symptoms may be worse around **secondhand smoke, cleaners, paints, cosmetics, and air fresheners**. Large amounts can stay in the air long after you have used them. **Any steps you take to reduce the amount of chemical irritants in your home will make your home healthier.**



## Possible Health Effects

- Asthma trigger
- Eyes, nose, and throat irritation
- Headaches
- Nausea
- Loss of coordination



Read product labels and look for phrases such as **DANGER, WARNING, and CAUTION**. Keep these products out of reach of children and store them safely.

## Avoiding Chemical Irritants

- **Keep the air moving** in your home by opening doors and windows to let in fresh air.
- **Use less-toxic products** (like “green” cleaners, which do not contain chemical irritants and are safer for your family and the earth) or stop using irritating products altogether.
- **If you must use a chemical irritant:**
  - Make sure a person with asthma is not around.
  - Open windows and doors to ventilate.
  - Follow instructions on the label so you don’t use too much.
- When possible, allow new furniture and rugs to “air out” outside of the home for 24 hours. Always open doors and windows to ventilate when bringing in materials that smell “new”.
- **Don’t allow smoking in your home or car.** Get help for yourself or family to quit by sharing tobacco educational materials from [www.quitlinenc.com](http://www.quitlinenc.com)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*UNC Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility:* [www.sph.unc.edu/cehs](http://www.sph.unc.edu/cehs)

*NC Asthma Program:*  
(919) 707-5213; [www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.asthma.ncdhhs.gov)

*US Environmental Protection Agency:*  
[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)

*NC Healthy Homes Initiative:*  
<http://www.nchealthyhomes.com>

Produced by the Community Outreach and Engagement Core of the UNC-Chapel Hill Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility with a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (P30ES010126).