

eAsthma Tracker

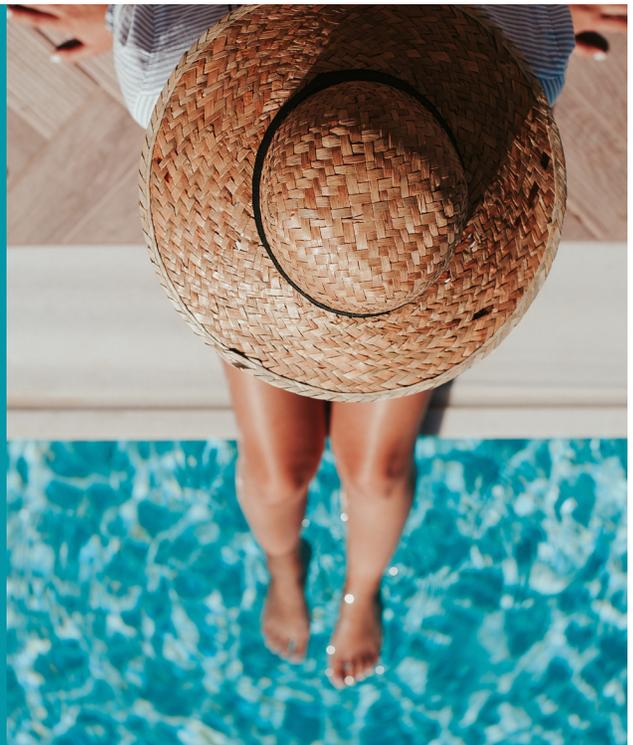
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NEWSLETTER

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Camping with Asthma

by Heidi Shunk

With summer upon us, kids are looking forward to camping, whether with their families or other organizations. Although sending your child off to camp with asthma may seem a little scary, with a little planning, their camping experience can be full of good memories and your mind can be at ease.

Visiting your pediatrician before your child does any camping this year is a good idea.

This will help to make sure that their asthma is well controlled and that all prescriptions are up to date. Talk to your doctor about an asthma action plan, discussing any possible difficulties and what to do in case of any emergencies while camping. Remember that EpiPens and rescue inhalers should not be used often and need to be checked for their expiration dates. Make sure that you have a current prescription, and refill them if needed.

If need for an EpiPen is likely, it is important to remember that the benefits may go away in 20 to 30 minutes; if you are further from medical care than that, you may need 2 or more EpiPens on hand. Always remember to bring your spacer device for inhaled asthma medications and your Asthma Action Plan.

Know where your child will be camping and research what types of vegetation are growing in that area.

Being outdoors, your child may be exposed to a different environment than they are used to. This can introduce environmental allergies caused by exposure to new plants, trees, grasses, and pollen, just to name a few. Knowing what pollens trigger your child's asthma will help in preparing to limit the effects these plants, trees and grasses may have on them.

Other things to keep in mind that may affect your child's asthma:

- Cold air in the nighttime or early mornings
- Smoke from campfires
- Hiking
- Higher or lower altitudes



Making this year's camping trip memorable begins at home.

By following these few tips and tricks, this camping experience can be the best one yet. Be sure to go through the "Asthma Packing List" (on page 3) with your child before they leave for their trip. Preparation is key for ensuring a safe, healthy, and fun experience.

Happy camping!

Asthma Packing List

Daily asthma medicine

Rescue inhaler

Antihistamine

(Such as Cetirizine, Zyrtec, Allegra, or Benadryl—depending on what your pediatrician has suggested or prescribed)

Wet wipes to wash your hands and face before bed

(This will help wipe away any pollen or allergens that you may have encountered during the day)

EpiPen

Cortisone cream

Prescribed nasal sprays

Prescribed allergy eye drops

Nebulizer with albuterol solutions (optional)

(Make sure that you will be somewhere where power will be available, or bring a power source that does not require an outlet)

Fast acting liquid Benadryl (optional)

(Be sure to discuss this with your doctor beforehand)



Why Do I Need to Treat My Asthma?

by Michelle Frazier and Kai Malmgren

IMPORTANT: Remember that you should never make any changes to your medicine regimen without consulting your doctor first.

When you first get diagnosed with asthma, it can be hard to make changes to your routine with new medications and lifestyle alterations. So, it might be tempting not to worry about treating your asthma. Or, if you have been on your asthma medication for some time and are doing well, it may be tempting to stop your medication. But there are consequences to not treating your asthma at all and even not treating it consistently.

Here are some facts that you need to consider:

- **Decreased Physical Activity:** Untreated asthma can make it harder to participate in physical activities. Exercise can cause untreated asthma to flare up and cause shortness of breath along with other asthma symptoms.

- **Poor Sleep:** Untreated asthma can disrupt sleep with nighttime coughing, wheezing, and loss of breath.
- **Decreased Mental Health:** Poor asthma control can lead to or increase symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- **Increased Illness:** Untreated asthma can increase the risk of pneumonia and other illnesses that involve your airways. It can also increase the time it takes to recover from these illnesses.
- **Permanent Damage:** Long-term untreated asthma can cause airway remodeling and permanent damage. Remodeling means the tubes in the lungs become thicker, and the muscles get enlarged and have a harder time relaxing. It can also cause scarring and loss of your lungs' surface layer.

Asthma is a progressive disease, and the longer it goes untreated the higher the risk of long-term effects. It's important to treat it sooner rather than later, and consistently.

At the same time, there are benefits that come when your asthma is well-controlled over time. Your success with your asthma treatment has less to do with how severe your asthma is and more to do with how well you control your asthma.



Why Do I Need to Treat My Asthma? Continued...

At the same time, there are benefits that come when your asthma is well-controlled over time. Your success with your asthma treatment has less to do with how severe your asthma is and more to do with how well you control your asthma.

Some of these benefits that come from well-controlled asthma include:

- **Fewer Emergency Room Visits:** When your asthma is well-controlled, your chances of needing to go to the emergency room or hospital are significantly decreased.
- **Well-being:** Well-controlled asthma means fewer symptoms. This can lead to better sleep and ability to be active, as well as being able to spend less time away from work and social life.
- **Freedom from Flare-Ups:** You can go about your life knowing your chances of an exacerbation are much less likely when your asthma is well-controlled.

When your asthma is well-controlled, you will be able to approach life knowing that your asthma won't keep you from doing the things that are important to you.

Are you unsure if your asthma is well-controlled?

Filling out the eAsthma Tracker consistently will help you and your doctor keep track of how you are doing.

Sources:

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Asthma Trivia

Test your asthma knowledge

by Aubrey Shunk

Are the following statement true or false?

Asthma affects your covid symptoms.

True. Asthma can worsen your breathing and lung capacity if you have COVID-19

Asthma is just in your head.

False. For a long time, people thought the symptoms for asthma were self-induced. However, there are proven studies showing that asthma could be something you inherited genetically or could be caused by the environments you are frequently exposed to.

Asthma should only be treated if you are sick or having a flare up.

False. If you treat your asthma symptoms even when they aren't super prevalent, you can help reduce flare ups and worsening symptoms with sickness

Asthma can occur as an adult when you use substances like cigarettes, vapes, or any device that delivers chemicals to your lungs.

True. Asthma affects your airways and lungs, so when those substances are used, they decrease the functions of your lungs and airways. This makes it harder to breathe, inducing asthma-like symptoms.

Asthma affects more than 5% of Americans.

True. According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, about 26.5 million people throughout the United States have asthma. 20.4 million of those are adults and 6.1 million are children. This is about 8.3% of the population.

Weather conditions can worsen asthma symptoms.

True. Extremely dry and extremely wet conditions can cause asthma symptoms to worsen. This is because the weather affects your lungs' breathing capacity.

Rescue medications can cure your asthma.

False. Rescue medications can help decrease asthma symptoms for a short period of time, but do not cure asthma.

You can outgrow asthma.

False. A lot of people are under the impression that as you get older, if you don't have your regular symptoms, that you have outgrown asthma. But that does not happen. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, asthma could become dormant when you get older. But once you get sick or enter a new stage in life, it could come back full force.

Source:

<https://www.epa.gov/asthma/do-children-outgrow-asthma#:~:text=No.,but+they+still+have+asthma>

Allergies and Asthma

by Dr. Joseph Johnson

As we transition into the allergy season (and I blow my nose for the 40th time today), I thought it might be beneficial to discuss the relationship between allergies and asthma. **Allergies are a common trigger for asthma symptoms. Many of these are termed “environmental allergens.”** Common allergens in this group that we think of include the following:

- Grasses
- Trees
- Pollens
- Pets (dogs, cats, etc.)
- Dust mites
- Bugs, especially cockroaches
- Molds

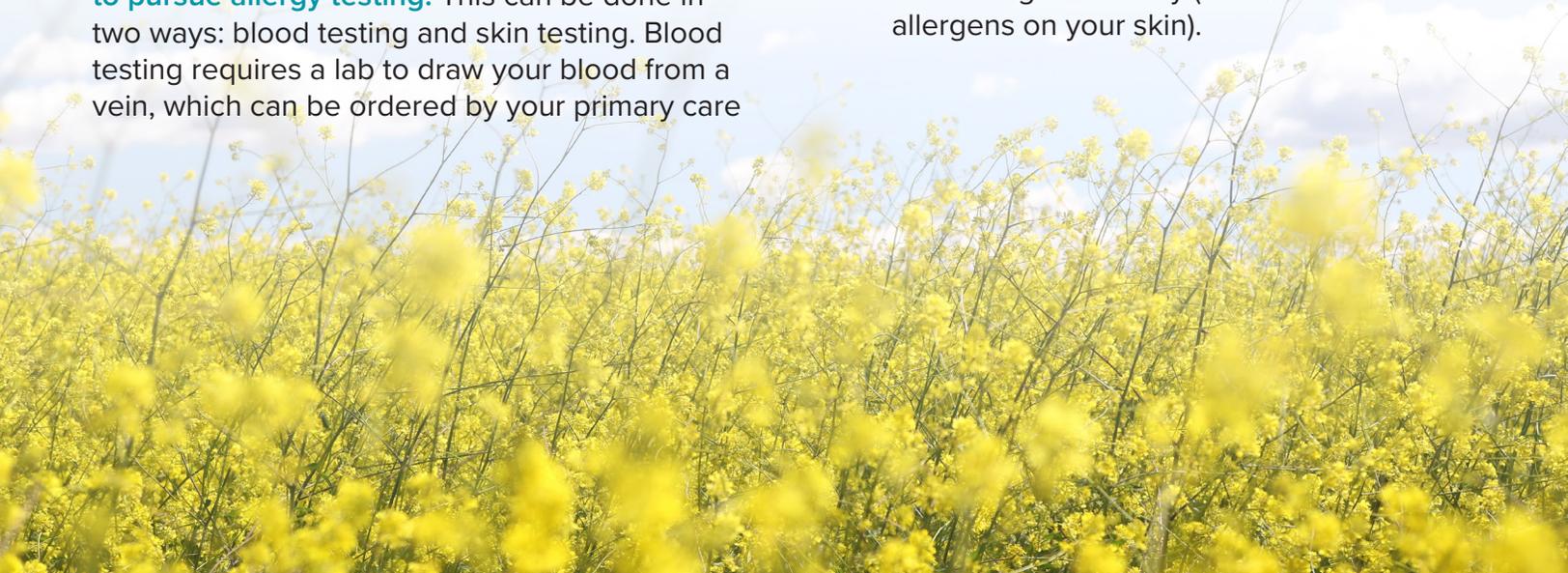
Some of these allergens are perennial, meaning they are present at all times of the year. These would include pets, dust mites, cockroaches, and molds. Some are considered seasonal, meaning they are only present at certain times of the year, particularly Spring and Autumn. These would include grasses, trees, and pollens.

It is often helpful to understand your specific allergies to optimize your asthma treatment. This is particularly important if you notice your asthma tends to worsen at certain times of the year. Also, **if you notice that visiting certain places (such as grandma’s house, with her dog or cat) tend to worsen your asthma, it may be a good idea to pursue allergy testing.** This can be done in two ways: blood testing and skin testing. Blood testing requires a lab to draw your blood from a vein, which can be ordered by your primary care

physician. Skin testing, or prick testing, is done using small amounts of the allergen being put into your skin and then looking for a reaction. This is usually done in the office of an allergy specialist, but some primary care physicians perform these tests.

Once you know what your allergies are, you can take steps to limit your exposure to them. These would include the following:

- Covering mattresses, box springs, and pillows with allergy-proof covers.
- Washing bedding (sheets, blankets, pillowcases) weekly.
- Replacing old carpets in the home, especially in the bedrooms of those with asthma. Use of washable rugs is better. Tile, vinyl, and wood floors are better for asthma.
- Use of a HEPA filter in the home. Frequently changing furnace filters.
- Avoiding humidifiers in the home (dust mites and molds like humidity).
- Limiting contact with pets to which you are allergic.
- Keeping windows closed.
- Air conditioners are better than swamp coolers (less humidity).
- Keeping floors and cupboards clean of food debris (cuts down on cockroaches).
- Showering twice daily (decreases the allergens on your skin).



Allergies and Asthma Continued...

The Utah and Salt Lake County Health Departments have an Asthma Home visiting Program which is free to the public. They can come to your home to assess for any concerns related to environmental allergens. To access this program, contact them at the following numbers (ask for the **Utah Asthma Home Visiting Program**):

- Salt Lake County Health Department (385-468-3651)
- Utah County Health Department (801-851-7509)

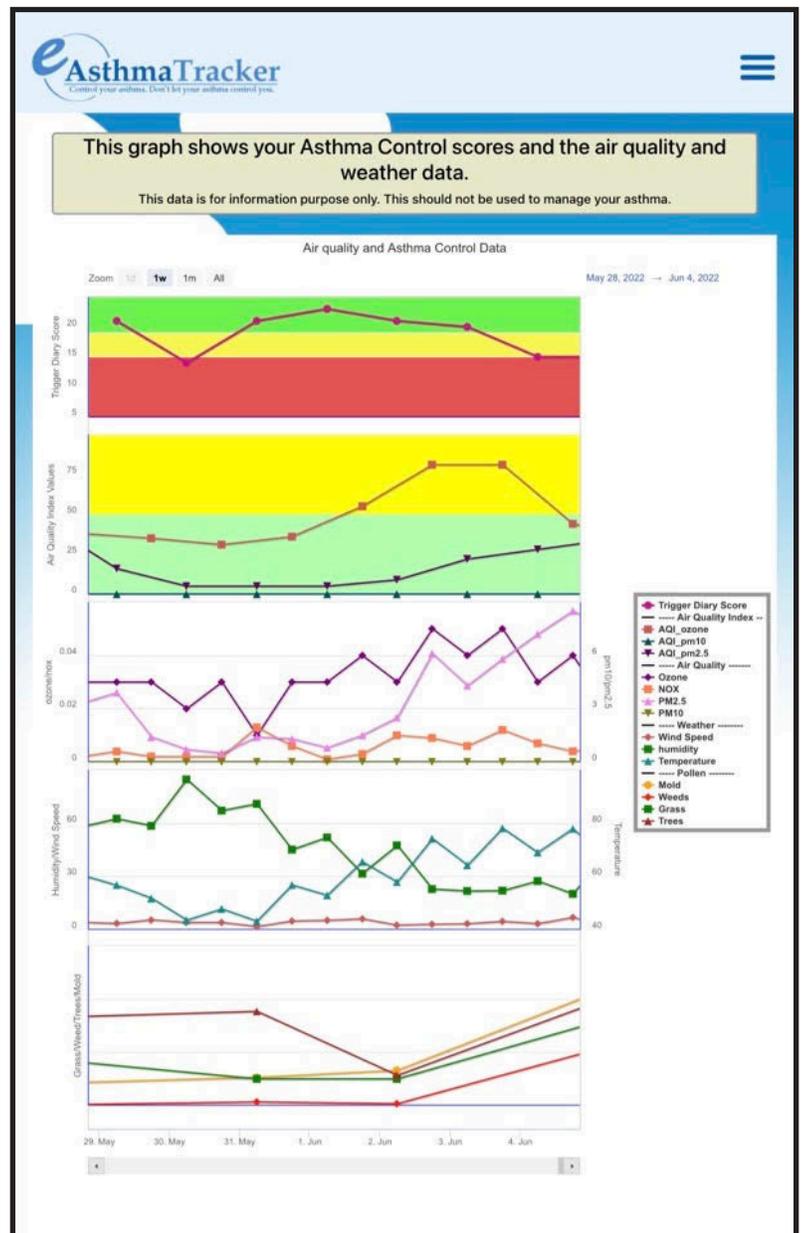
There are several medications that can be used to treat allergies. These can be used at the same time as you take your asthma medicines. Some of them include:

- Saline nasal sprays—help to rinse allergens out of your nose
- Steroid nasal sprays (e.g., Flonase)—over the counter
- Oral antihistamines (e.g., Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra)—over the counter
- Leukotriene receptor antagonists (e.g., Singulair)—requires a prescription
- Biologics (e.g., Xolair, Nucala)—requires a prescription. Usually prescribed by an allergist.
- Allergen immunotherapy—can be done either oral or by injection “allergy shots”—usually done by an allergist.

You can also check out the Asthma Trigger Diary feature in your eAsthma Tracker account! The Asthma Trigger Diary allows you to track the various environmental triggers you encountered and how those triggers impacted your asthma symptoms each day.

You can also compare your daily diary entries to a Pollution Graph which displays a range of air quality, weather, and pollen data in the state of Utah. Go to your Profile page within your account to enable this secondary feature!

I have found that effectively treating allergies can be very helpful in controlling asthma symptoms. Your doctor(s) can help work out the best treatment plan for you.



Check out this secondary study on Air Pollution and Asthma offered by the eAsthma Tracker Research team! Contact the research team to learn more!

the Air Pollution & Asthma study

Air pollutants and other environmental triggers have been linked to worsening of asthma symptoms.

We want to better understand why air pollution worsens asthma symptoms and if asthma-related genes may impact your or your child's sensitivity to air pollutants.

We are looking for participants.

Join today!



Participants will be compensated for their time

WHO

- Are you 18 years or older and have asthma? *or* Do you have a child between the ages of 2-17 with asthma?
- Are you interested in learning about what might personally trigger your (*or your child's*) asthma?

If yes, contact us about participating today!

WHAT

- We will ask you (*and/or your child*) to provide a saliva DNA sample.
- We will sign you up for the **eAsthma Tracker** to help you better monitor your asthma symptoms and changes in your asthma control related to air pollution and other asthma triggers.

HOW

**Contact the Asthma Research Team!
(801) 449-1373**

asthmatracker.research@hsc.utah.edu

