



Better Asthma Control for Kids

1:1 BACK Identifying Asthma Triggers Lesson Plan

Topic:

Part 1: Understand what asthma triggers are and how they can affect your breathing

Part 2: Understand how to recognize and manage triggers on a basic level

Objectives: By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand what asthma triggers are
- Identify triggers that affect *their own* breathing
- Recognize that triggers can affect people differently
- Learn basic ways to live with triggers safely, rather than fear them
- Practice noticing patterns in their symptoms

Teaching Aids:

- Asthma trigger flash cards (common triggers)
- Small Green / Yellow / Red cards for student sorting (Visuals provided below),
- Table or floor space for visual layout

Suggestions for Use:

- After introducing Asthma Basics and Inhaler Use
- When students have frequent symptoms or unclear triggers
- During seasonal changes (spring allergies, winter illnesses, wildfire smoke),
- After an asthma flare-up, ER visit, or repeated nurse visits
- Anytime: as a confidence-building activity to increase self-awareness

Time:

Part 1: 15–25 minutes

Part 2: 15–20 minutes

Grade Level: Elementary (K–5; language and depth of material can be adjusted)



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Procedure Part 1: Trigger Basics

Understand what asthma triggers are and how they can affect your breathing

1. Introduction (3–5 minutes)

Start by asking the student if they know what an asthma trigger is. This helps you get a frame of their current understanding.

From there you can provide an explanation:

- “A trigger is something around us that can make breathing harder for someone with asthma.”
- **A trigger can bother the lungs or make our breathing harder.**
- Everyone’s lungs are different, so your asthma triggers may be different from your friends.

Clarify:

“Everyone who has asthma has different triggers, so things that make breathing harder for you might be different for other people with asthma, and that’s totally normal.”

2. Teaching Points (10 minutes)

A. What Are Asthma Triggers?

Kid-friendly explanation:

- “Asthma triggers are things in the air, in our bodies, or around us that can bother our lungs. They can make our chest feel tight, make us cough, get sniffly, or feel out of breath.”
- “Triggers don’t cause asthma – but they can irritate our lungs and make our asthma flare up.”
- “Some triggers bother some people a lot, while others aren’t bothered at all.”

Ask: “Have you noticed your breathing feels different in certain places or situations?”

If they’re unsure, gently prompt:

- “Maybe when you’re sick it feels harder to breathe?”
- “What about during the summer when it’s hot, or in the spring when there’s a lot of flowers and weeds?”
- “Or around animals – do you every get extra sniffly?”

B. Trigger Flash Card Exploration

Activity Setup:



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- Place trigger flash cards one by one where students can see them.
- Go through each card slowly.

For each trigger card, ask:

- a. Have you ever noticed any coughing, wheezing, or trouble breathing when you're around this?
- b. Does this bother you a little, a lot, or not at all?

Normalization of Triggers:

- a. "It's okay if you're not sure what your triggers are yet – they can be hard to notice. That's why we're talking about all the triggers together, so you can start to notice them on your own."
- b. "Asthma triggers can be hard to notice because the symptoms may not show up right away. Sometimes it can take a few hours before something starts to feel wrong."

CONTINUE ON with Part 2: Understand MY Triggers if you have more time

OR

STOP HERE if out of time, continue another time with Part 2: Understand MY Triggers

Procedure Part 2: Understand MY Triggers

Understand how to recognize and manage triggers on a basic level

Reintroduction: (If there was a break after part 1) ask them to recall what you talked about last time

- Can you tell me what an asthma trigger is?
- What are some asthma triggers that you remember?

1. Trigger Sorting Activity (5-7 minutes)

Explain the colors clearly:

- **Green** = "This does not bother my asthma"
- **Yellow** = "This bothers my asthma a little"



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- **Red** = “This is a strong trigger for me”

Instructions Explained:

- “We’re going to place a green, yellow, or red card next to each trigger to show how it affects *you*. There are no right or wrong answers, this is about *your body*.”
 - “If there’s a trigger I’ve noticed affects you, or maybe some that your parents told me about and you don’t know about them, I’ll make sure to talk to you about those too!”
 - *Have students place their color cards next to each trigger.*
 - *Once complete, pause and observe together*
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2. Visual Reflection & Discussion (5 minutes)

“Do you notice more green, yellow, or red?”

“Did anything surprise you?”

“Do you think your triggers might change when you’re sick or tired?”

Together, count the number of green triggers, yellow triggers, and red triggers.

“Knowing your triggers is super important because it helps you do all the things you love without your asthma getting in the way.”

“It also helps grown-ups know how to help your lungs.”

3. Living With Triggers (1-2 minutes)

Key message: “We don’t have to be scared of triggers; we just need to be able to notice them and know what to do next.”

One big idea for kids: “When we notice a trigger, we can make a *smart move* for our lungs.”

Three ways to handle triggers

1. Move away from whatever it is
 2. Change the activity you’re doing
 3. Tell an adult as soon as possible if you see a trigger
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4. Trigger-Specific Discussion Prompts (Use as Needed)

“Now let's talk about *your triggers* and the smart moves that help your lungs.”

Smoke (grilling, campfires, wildfire smoke)

- “If possible, we can move farther away from any smoke”
- “We can cover our mouth and nose during wildfires”
- “We can let an adult know ahead of time”

Pets

- “We can wash our hands after touching pets and animals”
- “Should pets stay out of bedrooms?”
- “Do symptoms happen right away or later?”

Pollen / Seasonal Allergies

- “Do you notice trouble breathing, coughing, or wheezing more in spring or fall?”
- “Is there any medicine you take for allergies?”
- “Does it help to take a shower or change your clothes after being outside?”

Exercise

- “Does breathing feel tight during or after running?”
- “Do you ever use an inhaler before activity?”
- “Slowing down, drinking some water, and catching your breath can help.”

Colds & Illness

- “Does asthma ever feel worse when you're sick?”
- “Do symptoms tend to happen more at night?”

Weather (cold air, heat)

- “Does breathing feel different on very hot or very cold days?”
- “Covering your mouth, ears, and neck in cold air can really help!”

5. Wrap-Up & Review (3–5 minutes)

Ask:

- a. “What is an asthma trigger?”
- b. “Do triggers affect everyone the same way?”



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- c. “What should you do if you notice a trigger bothering your breathing?”

Key Takeaways:

- a. Triggers are things that can bother your lungs.
- b. Knowing your triggers helps keep you safe and makes breathing easier.
- c. Some triggers you can stay away from.
- d. Some triggers can handle with medicine or help from an adult
- e. It’s always okay to ask for help early.

“You just learned something really important about your body - great job noticing!”

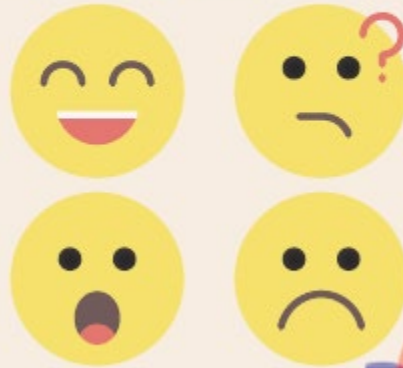


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Pollen



Emotions



Weather



Exercise





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Dust mites



Wildfire



Cat



Dog





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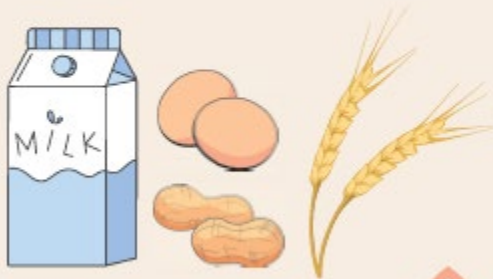
Dust



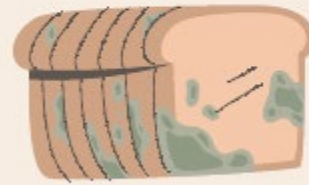
Illness



Foods



Mold





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Smoke



**Strong
Odors**



**Other
Animals**





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