

Environmental Health in Group Prenatal Care: Asthma Activity Kit Description

Item	Activity Use
Cockroach	<p>Asthma Impact: Many people do not realize that cockroaches both cause and trigger asthma. Use integrated pest management (IPM) to control rodents and other pests. Remember “EEK!” – exclude, eliminate, keep away.</p> <p>Solution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor roaches in the home using inexpensive “sticky traps” - Practice IPM to keep roaches away (wash dishes, put food (including pet food!) away, fix water leaks) - Use bait stations (“roach motels”) to control roaches in the home. These are much safer than using sprays or foggers. Place baits where children and pets cannot reach them.
Copper mesh (scrubbers)	<p>Asthma Impact: Rodents are a common asthma trigger. Use integrated pest management (IPM) to control rodents and other pests. Remember “EEK!” – exclude, eliminate, keep away.</p> <p>Solution: Steel wool and copper mesh help exclude rodents from a home because they can’t chew through it to re-open plugged holes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase inexpensive rolls of both from hardware store (doesn’t have to be the scrubbers). Steel wool costs less, but copper mesh will not rust away. - Stuff holes with mesh before sealing - Note: mice can fit through a hole the size of a pencil eraser <p>Other notes: We encourage IPM as an alternative to chemical solutions. Pesticides can be very dangerous to use, and many of these chemicals also trigger asthma in sensitive individuals.</p>
Dust mite-proof pillow cover	<p>Dust mites: Dust mites are microscopic insects that feed on skin particles found in dust. One speck of dust can contain hundreds of dust mites. They are ubiquitous in our environment, and harmless to anyone without a dust mite allergy. It is estimated that about 10% of the weight of a two-year old pillow is made up of dust mites.</p> <p>Asthma impact: Dust mite waste is a common asthma trigger. Controlling exposure (especially in the bedroom) can help reduce attacks.</p> <p>Solution: Dust mites cannot be eliminated from the environment, but they can be reduced, and exposure can be controlled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dust mite-proof pillow (and mattress) covers are made with a very tight weave that does not let bed bugs into (or out of) a pillow. These are used under your normal pillow case. Quality and price varies, but most cases can be purchased for \$5-\$10 at most “big box” stores that sell bedding. Cover should specify “dust mite” control; some advertise allergen control, but many common allergens are larger than dust mites and are more easily blocked. - Wash and dry cover with bedding weekly on hottest temperature settings to kill dust mites

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Food container	<p>Asthma Impact: Many pests trigger asthma. Use integrated pest management (IPM) to control rodents and other pests. Remember “EEK!” – exclude, eliminate, keep away.</p> <p>Solution: Pests are attracted to food, water and shelter. Storing food in airtight containers helps keep pests away by reducing food. Other containers can be used in the home to help reduce clutter, which reduces shelter (hiding places and nesting material) for pests.</p> <p>Other notes: The supplied food containers are glass. Some participants may talk about glass versus plastic containers. Though this is not related to asthma, it may be a good opportunity to talk about exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in plastic (e.g., BPA and phthalates).</p>
Mouse trap	<p>Asthma Impact: Rodents are a common asthma trigger. Use integrated pest management (IPM) to control rodents and other pests. Remember “EEK!” – exclude, eliminate, keep away.</p> <p>Solution: Snap traps are a relatively safe and very effective way to eliminate rodents from a home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Place trap where pests travel, out of reach of children and pets (under dressers/couches, behind appliances, etc). Start with an unbaited trap for a few days (let the pests get used to their presence). - Bait traps with a dab of peanut butter or wet cat food (these are inexpensive and irresistible rodent treats. Cheese is not!) - Use the right trap – small traps for mice; large traps for rats <p>Other notes: Other options are available, but have limitations/drawbacks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sticky traps: very inexpensive, but do not kill the animal. These can be very traumatic for both rodents and residents - Live traps: rodent must be disposed of far away from the home, or it will simply return - Other killing trap options: as effective as snap traps, but often more expensive
NYS Smokers’ Quitline card	<p>Exposures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First-hand smoke – direct inhalation from cigarette/tobacco product - Second-hand smoke – inhalation of smoke emitted from tobacco product smoked by someone else - Third-hand smoke – exposures to chemicals in tobacco smoke when particles “cling” to other materials (clothes, hair, carpeting, furniture,etc) <p>Asthma Impact: Exposure to tobacco smoke can cause children to develop asthma. Smoke is also a common trigger.</p> <p>Solution: Best option for health is to quit smoking. However, this can be a long process. Others in your household might also choose not to quit. To protect your baby:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Always smoke outside at least 6 feet away from children and asthmatics (never smoke in the house or a car) - Wear a “smoking jacket” and leave it outside when you come in. This limits third-hand smoke exposure.

Item	Activity Use
Plug-in air freshener	<p>Asthma Impact: Fragrances such as perfumes, sprays and air fresheners, and even cleaning products are all common triggers.</p> <p>Solution: Avoid using air fresheners to mask odor. Instead, eliminate the source of the odors (remove garbage, clean regularly). When necessary, try to use alternative “fresheners” such as baking soda, or air fresheners made with natural ingredients like essential oils.</p> <p>Other notes: Most air fresheners/fragrance products contain chemicals (like phthalates) that may cause reproductive toxicity or other problems.</p>
Scented candle	<p>Asthma Impact: In addition to scent, smoke is a common asthma trigger.</p> <p>Solution: Avoid burning candles in homes with asthmatics who are sensitive to smoke and fragrances.</p> <p>Other notes: Candles pose a significant fire hazard. Never leave candles unattended while burning, and make sure matches/fire starters are stored out of children’s reach. Avoid foreign-made candles with metal wicks, as they may contain lead.</p>
Stuffed animal	<p>Dust mites: Dust mites are microscopic insects that feed on skin particles found in dust. One speck of dust can contain hundreds of dust mites. They are ubiquitous in our environment, and harmless to anyone without a dust mite allergy. It is estimated that about 10% of the weight of a two-year old pillow is made up of dust mites.</p> <p>Asthma impact: Dust mite waste is a common asthma trigger. Controlling exposure (especially in the bedroom) can help reduce attacks.</p> <p>Solution: Dust mites cannot be eliminated from the environment, but they can be reduced, and exposure can be controlled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allow stuffed animals, but limit sleeping “companion” to one or two. - Wash and dry “sleeping companion” weekly on hottest temperature setting to kill dust mites <p>Other notes: Very difficult to locate stuffed animals that can be washed and dried. May reduce longevity of stuffed animal.</p>