5 Tips to Help Manage Springtime Asthma Flares

by REBECCA PACIOREK

How to Manage Asthma in the Spring Months

Achoo, sniffle, sniffle, snort, achoo!

Sound familiar? Me too. Life with asthma means all year long feels like “allergy season.” But for some (like myself) Spring brings an extra ounce of torture. You see, I wasn’t born with asthma. My asthma came on slowly through the years as my allergies grew and grew and became worse and worse.

Finally, in the Spring of 2003, while I was pregnant, my asthma reached a peak when I just could not breathe. After the fun testing, that I know you have probably also endured, I received the official diagnosis. This when I started researching ways to make breathing a little more comfortable.

When the flowers bloom and the spring breezes blow, it may be beautiful outside, but my nose and lungs are in full disagreement and continuously fight me on taking those big breaths.

How to Avoid Springtime Asthma Flares

- **Avoid pollen when possible.** You can check the pollen reports before planning a picnic, and you can also try to stay indoors from 5 to 10 am when the pollen is usually highest. Also, remember, pollen is higher and swarming around more on warm, breezy days.
- **Turn on your air conditioner.** Yes, I know you want to feel the fresh breeze and air out your house, but by doing so, you are letting in all the pollen and freshly cut grass. And, since most people are allergic-asthmatic, you are most likely doing yourself a disservice. Enjoy a cup of coffee at an outdoor cafe or take Fido for a nice walk but when at home, be sure to be breathing inside air. Same goes for in the car. Use your air conditioner instead of open windows during prime allergy season. It’s not as fun, but I promise that breathing better IS fun.
- **Clean your air filters regularly.** Speaking of that inside air, if it’s dirty air, then it’s not going to help you. Using good air filters in your HVAC system and changing them on a regular basis will go a long way to keeping the air in your home fresh and clean.
- **Leave your shoes at the door.** Your shoes (and rest of your clothes) will bring any grasses and pollens into your home, and these are what most likely will trigger your asthma. So, if you can leave your shoes at the door and change your clothes after being outdoors, this will help keep the allergies at bay. You may also consider showering before bed to be sure all the pollen is off before sleeping.
- **Use allergy covers on your pillows and your mattresses.** These can help fend off dust mites and other allergens. Be sure to wash them now and then and also change your sheets/pillowcases frequently. And, even though it’s breezy outside, don’t be tempted to hang your clean sheets (or other clothes) on the line outside as that’s a great way to pick up many allergens and bring them into your home.

Is It Allergies, Asthma or Both?

During the spring, sometimes it can be hard to tell exactly what is causing your trouble breathing. If you have some of the following symptoms, most likely, allergies are to blame:

- Congestion
- Itchy nose or eyes
- Red or watery eyes
- Sneezing
- A runny nose

However, those symptoms caused by allergies can cause your asthma to flare up and breathing to become difficult. This is the time of year when it’s really important to keep an eye on what you and your doctor have defined for your “asthma zones.”

Be sure to take all your medications as prescribed, including doing a breathing treatment before exercise if discussed, and keep your relief medication with you at all times.

If you are doing all that you think you can to keep your asthma and allergies at bay and are still finding it difficult to breathe or do your daily tasks, be sure and talk with your doctor and maybe even an allergist. There are many options available to assist in making it easier for you.

Though asthma and allergic asthma can be bothersome during the spring, if you take the proper precautions and keep open communications with your doctor, you should be able to enjoy some of the great outdoors and still be able to breathe through it all.