

# A Guide to Asthma Triggers and the State Sanitary Code for Housing

## *For residents and property owners*

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### What are asthma triggers that I can look for in my home?

- Dust mites

Dust mites are too small to be seen but are found in every home. Dust mites live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric-covered furniture, bedcovers, clothes and stuffed toys.

- Molds

Mold grows on damp materials. If mold is a problem in your home, clean up the mold and get rid of excess water or moisture. Lowering the moisture also helps reduce other triggers, such as dust mites and cockroaches.

- Pests

Droppings or body parts of pests such as cockroaches or rodents can be asthma triggers due to allergies.

- Extreme Temperatures

An ideal temperature for any person but especially people with asthma is one where it is neither too hot nor too cold. Cold, dry air can cause lungs to become inflamed. The more the lungs become constricted, the less air is able to get to them.

### Are there asthma triggers that cannot be enforced by the housing sanitary code?

Sure. Cigarette smoke and can trigger asthma attacks as can odors from hazardous chemicals. The Boston Public Health Commission offers in-home air-quality testing to see what amounts of chemicals there are in your air and if those amounts can be dangerous to your health. The Healthy Homes Program also offers asthma education and cleaning supplies.

To contact the:

Breathe Easy at Home Program (Enforced home inspections)  
OR the Healthy Homes Program (Educational home visits),  
call: 617-534-5966.



# A Guide to Asthma Triggers and the State Sanitary Code for Housing cont'd

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## Are these trigger sanitary code violations? In a word, Yes!

### Dust

#### 410.602: Maintenance of Areas Free from Garbage and Rubbish

(B) Dwelling Units. The occupant of any dwelling unit shall be responsible for maintaining in a clean and sanitary condition ...that part of the dwelling which s/he exclusively occupies or controls.  
(D) Common Areas. In any dwelling, the owner shall be responsible for maintaining in a clean and sanitary condition ...that part of the dwelling which is used in common by the occupants and which is not occupied or controlled by one occupant exclusively.

### Mold

#### 410.500: Owner's Responsibility to Maintain Structural Elements

Every owner shall maintain the foundation, floors, walls, doors, windows, ceilings, roof, staircases, porches, chimneys, and other structural elements of his dwelling so that the dwelling excludes wind, rain and snow, and is rodent-proof, watertight and free from chronic dampness, weather tight, in good repair and in every way fit for the use intended.

#### 410.280: Natural and Mechanical Ventilation

The owner shall provide for each habitable room, and room containing a toilet, bathtub or shower, ventilation to the outdoors consisting of:

(A) windows, skylights, doors or transoms in the exterior walls or roofs that can be easily opened to a minimum of 4% of the floor area of that habitable room or room containing a toilet, bathtub or shower, provided, that a skylight which if open exposes the interior of the dwelling to direct rainfall shall not satisfy this requirement...

### Pests

#### 410.550: Extermination of Insects, Rodents and Skunks

The occupant of a (single-unit) dwelling...shall maintain the unit free from all rodents, skunks, cockroaches and insect infestation, and shall be responsible for exterminating them...

(B) The owner of a (multi-unit) dwelling...shall maintain it and its premises free from all rodents, skunks, cockroaches and insect infestation and shall be responsible for exterminating them.

#### 410.600: Storage of Garbage and Rubbish

Garbage...and rubbish shall be stored in watertight receptacles with tight-fitting covers...of metal or other durable, rodent-proof material.

(C) The owner of any dwelling...and the occupant of any other dwelling place shall provide as many receptacles for the storage of garbage and rubbish as are sufficient to contain the accumulation...and shall locate them so as to be convenient to the tenant ...

### Heat

#### 410.200: Heating Facilities Required

The owner shall provide and maintain in good operating condition the facilities for heating every habitable room...