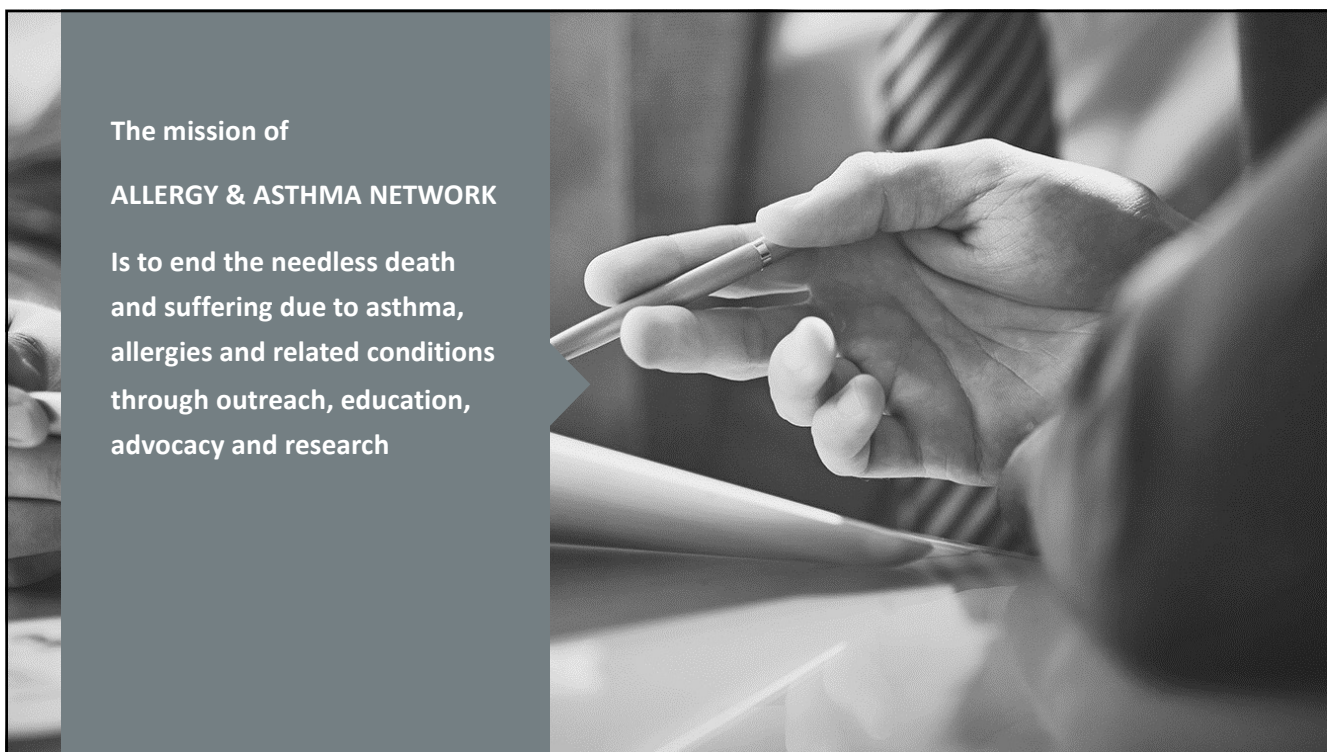




# Navigating the Holidays with Allergies & Asthma

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1



2

Meet Our Speakers



Lorene Alba, AE-C

Asthma & Allergy Educational Consultant  
Food Allergy and Chronic Disease  
Management Chef and Blogger  
Contributor, Asthma.net & Allergies.net



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Education Specialist, Allergy & Asthma Network  
Asthma Blogger, Food Allergy Mom  
Contributor, Asthma.net & Allergies.net

3

Today's Program



Managing Stress as a Trigger



The Scent of the Season



Where to stay





Managing Environmental Triggers



How to Pack for a Successful Holiday

4



How much does your stress level increase over the holidays?

5



Managing stress as an asthma trigger

6

# Your mental picture of the holidays . . .

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Perfectly decorated tree



Sharing family traditions



Picture perfect dinners



Togetherness

7

# And the reality . . .

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Big messes to clean



Lost luggage



Family disagreements



Catch a virus



Burned the dessert

8



## WHAT IS STRESS?



### How we REACT when we feel **under pressure** or threatened

Being in a situation that we don't feel we can manage or control

We can have stress when we have lots of responsibilities that we are struggling to manage

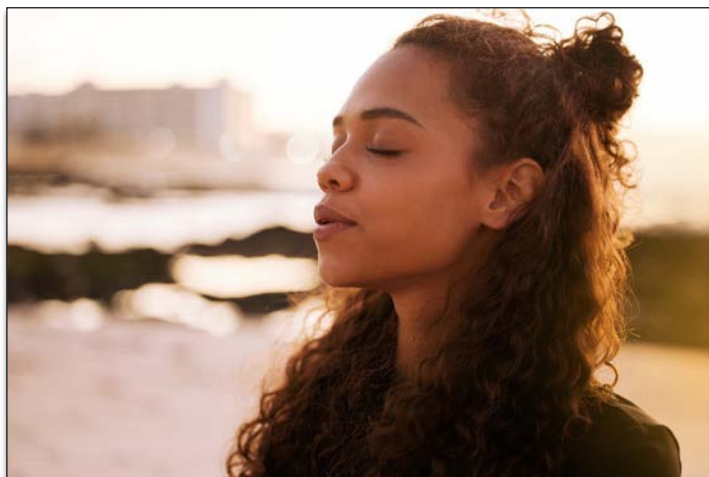
**Sound like the holidays?!**

9

The stressor is not what causes us to feel the physical symptoms of stress. It's our reaction to what is happening that causes the symptoms.

Stress is simply wishing our current situation was different. Accepting the situation for what it is can help reduce the physical symptoms of stress.

Take a moment to breathe in and out deeply. Put your hand on your heart and remind yourself that you are okay.



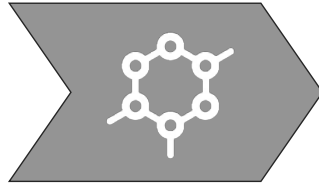
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## How does stress affect asthma?



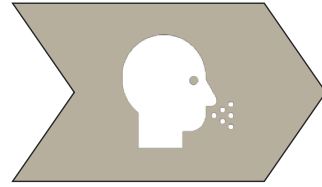
### Stress increases

Stress levels tend to increase – sometimes very quickly!



### Chemical release

Makes the muscles around the airways tighten – causing difficulty breathing

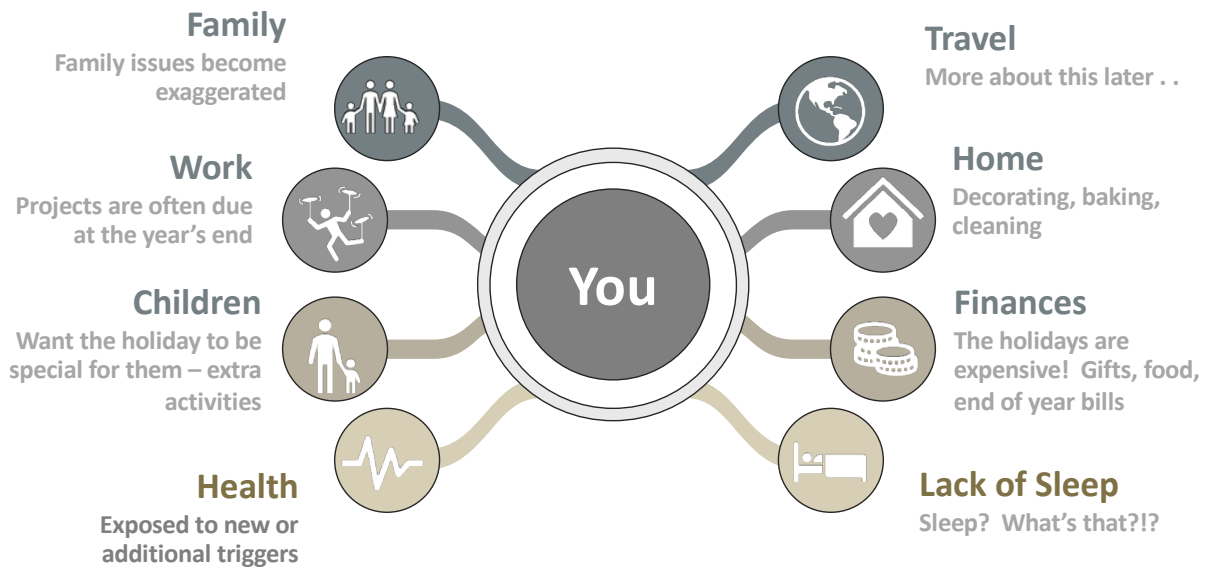


### Can weaken immune system

More likely to come down with a cold, flu or pneumonia or have an asthma episode

11

## What causes holiday stress?



12

## Stress Management

Information from the Centers for Disease Control

1

Take breaks from the news

Especially at election time!

Stay informed without hearing about traumatic events –

Disconnect!

2

Take care of yourself

Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out

3

Take care of your body

Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco & substance use  
Continue with routine health prevention  
Get vaccinated

4

Make time to unwind

Try to do some other activities you enjoy

Personal rest & renewal

13

## Stress Management

Information from the Centers for Disease Control

5

Talk to others

Talk with people you trust about your concerns & how you're feeling.

Share your problems with your trusted person or people

6

Community- or faith-based organizations

Share your burdens

7

Avoid drugs or alcohol

These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling

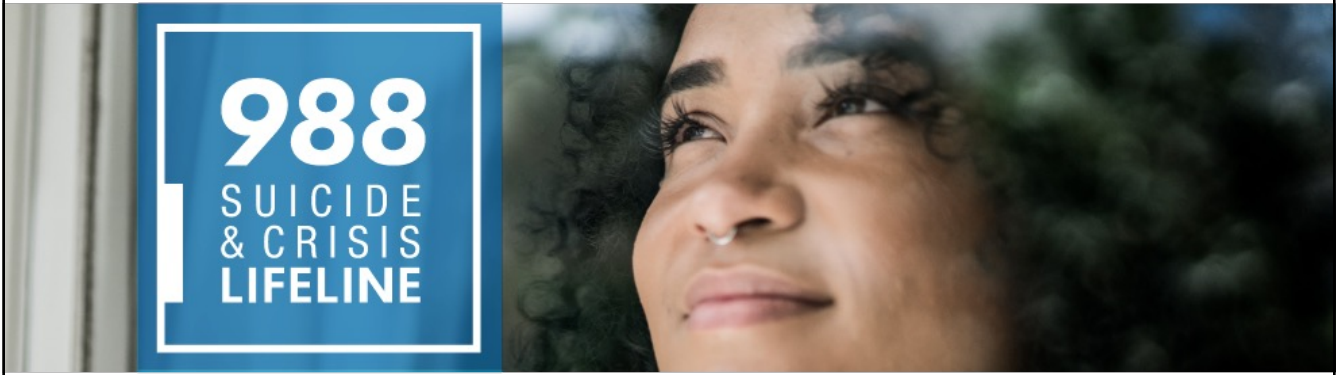
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Recognize when you need more help

If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor

14

# National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline



15

## Holiday Stress Busters!



Shop throughout the year/ take a trip



Remodeling projects

Say NO to activities



Create easy family traditions



Holiday Perfection



Ask for help!

16



## THE SCENT OF THE SEASON



17

## Fragrances affect both allergies & asthma

### Allergies

#### Fragrances

- Skin care products, colognes, perfumes, moisturizers, soaps, deodorants, aftershave, air fresheners, plug-in deodorizers, wick diffusers, fireplaces, bonfires
- They may make things smell nice but contain chemicals that our immune system may not like very much
- At Holiday time, add: scented candles, pinecones, Christmas trees, potpourri, cinnamon brooms

### Asthma

#### Fragrances are a common asthma trigger

- Lung function can change when exposed to strong odors
- Causes asthma exacerbation – coughing & wheezing
- Remove the odor from your environment or remove yourself from the odor
- Have inhaler handy

#### Did you know?

**41%** of people with asthma report health problems from air fresheners or deodorizers.

Graphic from <https://www.asthma.com/understanding-asthma/asthma-triggers/strong-odors-and-asthma/>

18

## Asthma triggers that are hard to avoid at the holidays

### Explore Common Asthma Triggers



Graphic from <https://www.asthma.com/understanding-asthma/asthma-triggers/strong-odors-and-asthma/>

19

## Tips for managing strong odors – allergies & asthma



Avoid secondhand smoke of any kind



Consider using cleaning and personal care products that are odor and fragrance free



Ask friends and family to limit their use of perfumes



Make sure your home and workplace are well ventilated

Graphic from <https://www.asthma.com/understanding-asthma/asthma-triggers/strong-odors-and-asthma/>

20

## Navigating scents while shopping



Avoid the holiday aisle



Be careful on the laundry soap aisle



Avoid the perfume counter




Try to avoid people wearing perfume or body spray


21



**WHERE TO STAY**

22







**POLL QUESTION**

When traveling, where do you stay?


23




Aunt Edna's



Remote Cabin



Hotel room



Air BnB, VRBO

## SO MANY CHOICES THESE DAYS . . .

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Traveling to see the sights?  
Traveling to see family?

- ✓
**Hotels & motels**  
 Chain hotels, independently owned
- ✓
**Other people's homes**  
 Your aunt with 5 cats? Your kids homes?  
 Your parents?
- ✓
**Rentals**  
 Air bnb, VRBO and many more

24

## Potential triggers at hotels & rentals



### Staying poolside?

Chlorine and mold can be present



Swimming pool with palm trees



### Who has stayed in the room before?

Someone with a service animal?



### Smoke

Even with a nonsmoking room, ask for a room as far away from smoking rooms as possible



Cigarettes in ashtray



### Carpeting

Is there a room without carpeting? Less allergens!



### Cleaning fumes

A big issue! Some hotel chains now offer asthma or allergy friendly rooms – always ask!

25

## Staying at other's homes

Challenges +

- Considerations

Pets ✓

✗ Pets allowed in all rooms?

Food allergies / dining ✓

✗ Remind them, carry autoinjectors

Cleanliness ✓

✗ Clean or vacuum when you arrive

Personal products / cleaning supplies ✓

✗ Temporarily move the supplies from your room or bathroom

26



## Staying at hotels & rentals

### Challenges +

### - Considerations

Cleaning ✓

✗ Put Do Not Disturb hang tag on doorknob

Air fresheners, signature scents ✓

✗ Ask for a room without diffusers or plug-in air fresheners

Dust mites ✓

✗ Bring your own towels, bedding or a sleep sack

Car and bus idling, smoking at the front entrance ✓

✗ Side entrance availability

27

## MANAGING ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS



28

## Weather Issues



Cold and windy air can trigger asthma symptoms and flare-ups



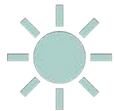
High altitude – skiing anyone?



Colds and flu season - can lead to more inflammation of your airways



Cold weather may keep you indoors – more triggers



Any changes in weather



29

## Dealing with Weather Issues



Cover your nose and mouth with a scarf to warm the air before you breathe it in



Use your short-acting albuterol inhaler at the **FIRST** sign of symptoms to keep asthma from getting worse







Stay if weather changes bother your asthma. Breathing warmer air will help open your airways – but avoid indoor allergens & irritants

If you experience symptoms frequently in cold weather, talk with your doctor about a long-term treatment plan



30

## AIR QUALITY


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- ✓ Big cities
- ✓ Humid areas
- ✓ Campfires
- ✓ Hot and humid places

31


## The holidays can expose you to new allergens

Holiday decorations, travel and stress can all present challenges for people with allergies and asthma




**New people, new environments**

Travel & visitors can expose you to new allergens & risk the development of new allergies




**Holiday triggers**

Candles, fires in the fireplace, fire pits outdoors



**New, close contacts**

We've social distanced for a few years – people are more comfortable with hugs and being close again – perfume & germs can cause issues



**Eats & treats**

New foods, cross-contact and hidden ingredients in holiday foods can cause new allergies or cause a reaction

32

## Helping Children with Food Allergies

### Plan Ahead

Call the restaurant to alert them to the food allergy. Work with the staff at all levels – chef, wait staff, etc. Talk about cross contact. Carry a chef card  
Remind children not to eat someone else's food.



### Be Watchful

Seat young children with food allergies near family members who can keep an eye on them – remind them no food sharing, using utensils and napkins rather than fingers.) Remember, food allergens must not touch the mucosal membranes (mouth, eyes, or nose)

### Keep it Fun

Focus on what the child CAN eat - rather than what they can't. Pack safe treats or food. Remind family members ahead of time and ask what food is being served. Explain the seriousness of a food allergy

33

## Holiday tips



Real tree – if possible, rinse the tree, including the trunk

This removes mold spores, pollen and terpene, an allergenic substance found in the sap of trees

Bring the tree inside once it's fully dry – the scent may still be irritating



Keep artificial trees and holiday decorations free of dust in storage

Store them in plastic or large bins

Have someone without allergies & asthma remove the tree and decorations for you



Don't feel obligated to visit homes with known allergens and irritants

Watch for cigarette smoke, wood-burning fireplaces, scented candles or pets



It may be best to skip party



Get your flu, COVID-19 and pneumonia vaccines

Talk to your doctor about when to get your vaccines. It's recommended that you get a COVID booster 2 weeks or more before family gatherings

34



Are you traveling this holiday season?

35



WHAT TO PACK

36



## Packing

- ✓ Pack your medicines first



Epi autoinjectors

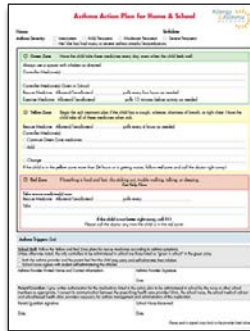


Allergy nose spray & pills



Reliever inhaler

- ✓ Bring your allergy or asthma plan



Asthma Action Plan Form

- ✓ Have a list of your medications



List of medicines

37

## Other Packing Tips

- 01 | Packing your child's favorite blanket or pillow
- 02 | Does your doctor want you pack oral steroids?
- 03 | Don't forget allergies pills and nose spray
- 04 | Pack your favorite lotion filled tissues

38

## If you need medical help during the holidays

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Bring "Out of State"  
Insurance Card

2

Look up facilities  
before you leave

3

Urgent Care vs  
Hospital?

4

Best way to get  
there?

5

Nearby  
pharmacy?

6

Follow up with  
doctor at home

39



QUESTIONS



Put your questions in the question box.

We'll get to as many as we can!

40

## Next Webinar

Join us for our upcoming webinar:

# Chronic Cough Concerns

Thursday, November 17, 2022  
4:00 PM ET



41

## Breathe Better Together



  
allergyasthmanetwork.org

Please remain online for 2 – 3 minutes to complete an evaluation survey! **Thank you!**

42