

Handling the Holidays

This article was reviewed by Stuart A. Friedman, MD, FAAAAI, AAAAI Patients & Consumers Web Editor.

Do asthma and allergies threaten to be the Grinch in your holidays? The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) offers these tips to help keep your season merry:

- The holidays are filled with hustle and bustle, but stress can trigger an asthma attack. Shop early or late in the day to avoid crowds. If “quiet time” isn’t a part of your normal routine, now is the time to start.
- Fires burning in the hearth bring warmth and ambiance to a holiday get-together. However, the smoke and ash can smother the spirit for some, provoking breathing difficulties or triggering an asthma attack. Request the Yule log remain unlit.
- Prepare for visits to homes with pets by taking your allergy or asthma medication before the visit. The medication may help reduce your reaction. You can also ask party hosts to keep Fido in a separate room.
- Food is a central fixture in most holiday gatherings. Remember that homemade items don’t come with ingredients lists. If you or your child has food allergies, be cautious, especially around homemade treats. Foods can become tainted through cross-contamination in the baker’s kitchen or food storage containers – and even a trace amount can trigger a reaction.

Visit the AAAAI Web site, www.aaaai.org, for additional patient resources on allergies and asthma, including allergyfriendly holiday recipes.



To the Point

Some individuals can be allergic to Christmas trees. Reduce your reaction by shaking your tree thoroughly—many vendors have a machine that can do this—and allowing it to dry for a few days in a covered area before bringing it indoors.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Avoid or reduce allergic reactions to dust and pet dander by bringing your own allergen-proof pillow when staying overnight with family or at a hotel.
- Clean dust from artificial Christmas trees and other holiday decorations before displaying. Remember that glass, metal and plastic decorations are easier to keep dust-free than soft fabric ones.
- If you have food allergies, ask about ingredients before eating homemade goodies. Better yet, avoid foods that might have been in contact with other ingredients in the baker’s kitchen.
- Visit www.aaaai.org for more tips on reducing asthma and allergy symptoms during the holidays.



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& Immunology

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*Your source for more information
or to find an allergist/immunologist.*