

Your Child's Health Care Provider

Make sure to take your child to see the health care provider at least twice a year. Discuss whether your child needs to have a pulmonary function test. This test determines how much air your child's lungs can hold, how quickly your child moves air in and out, and how well your child's lungs exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Visiting the provider gives you the opportunity to ask questions about your child's symptoms, especially if you have noticed changes since your last visit that might require a treatment plan change.

If your child must take medication during the day, contact the school or day care staff to learn about their policy and work out a plan. If your child is exhibiting asthma symptoms, the Asthma Action Plan provides a quick reference to help your child recover from the attack or get additional help as needed.

While the Asthma Action Plan can serve as a reference guide, please call 911 or go to the emergency room in critical or life-threatening situations.

For an example of a plan, log in to your Member website or call your health coach.

Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is an important written summary of your child's asthma symptoms, medications and plans for an emergency. It is a good way to share information about your child's asthma with family members, caregivers, neighbors, and your child's school or daycare.

You should work with your child's health care provider to create the plan. The information that you enter in the plan is divided into three zones — green, yellow and red. Each zone links the severity of your child's asthma symptoms with the appropriate medications and responses.



For more information about asthma, contact one of the following organizations:

American Lung Association
1-800-LUNGUSA
www.lung.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
1-800-7-ASTHMA
www.aafa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/asthma/children.htm

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute
1-301-592-8573
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

The above constitutes a sampling of organizations that provide information about asthma. Other organizations may be available in your area. We do not recommend or endorse any one organization.

This service is designed to provide you with general health education, information and support in making informed health care decisions. We do not diagnose, provide medical advice, or make treatment recommendations. Please see your benefit plan for a description of covered services. This service is not a substitute for medical care from your doctor. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider for any medical concerns or questions.

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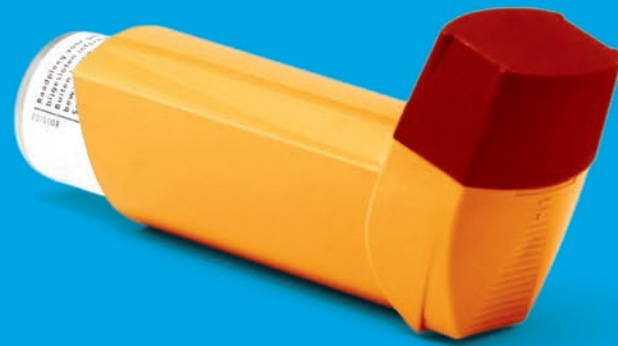
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Asthma Overview

What You Need to Know



What Is Asthma?



Asthma is a chronic condition that causes airways to become tight, swollen and narrowed, making it difficult to breathe. Asthma can also produce excess mucus and cause persistent respiratory symptoms, making breathing even harder. For some children, asthma can cause dangerous attacks.

There is no known cause or cure for asthma. But you can help control your child's asthma by:

- Helping your child to stay away from things that trigger an attack
- Knowing the warning signs of an attack
- Making sure your child takes his/her medications
- Following the advice of your child's health care professional

Controlling asthma can help your child have fewer symptoms, sleep more soundly, miss less school, participate fully in physical activities, and stay out of the hospital.

Triggers

The first step to controlling asthma is to identify what triggers your child's asthma symptoms. Asthma triggers are certain allergens, smells, environmental factors and other stimuli that can cause an asthma attack. Your child's triggers can be very different from those of another child with asthma. Common asthma triggers include:

- Allergens, like pet dander, pollen, mold and mildew, and dust
- Irritants, such as smoke, weather changes, fumes, strong odors and perfumes
- Household products, including paints, varnishes, aerosols, air fresheners and cleaning products
- Colds, flu, sinusitis, and heartburn or acid reflux disease
- Exercise, anxiety and stress

Precautions

After you identify your child's triggers, take simple precautions to limit your child's exposure. Consider ways to dust-proof your home, and be careful about the products you use when doing household chores. Control the air in your home by closing windows, using air conditioners and dehumidifiers, and maintaining heating and cooling systems. Avoid triggers outside the home, like secondhand smoke or pets. Be aware of changes in weather conditions, and plan activities appropriately, especially on cold or Air Quality Action Days.

Warning Signs

The second step to help control your child's asthma is to watch for signs that your child may be on the verge of an attack. If your child experiences any of these common warning signs, learn to respond correctly — by handling early symptoms, knowing when to contact the health care provider, or seeking immediate medical care:

- Episodes of coughing or wheezing
- Frequent throat clearing
- Difficulty taking a deep breath
- Frequent coughing at night or while sleeping
- Waking up unable to breathe
- Allergies
- Cold symptoms more than three months a year
- Missing school because of coughing or wheezing
- Wheezing or difficulty breathing when exercising
- Using inhalers more than twice a week for flare-ups

Avoid triggers outside the home, like secondhand smoke or pets.

Call 911 or go immediately to the emergency room if your child:

- Is unable to speak full sentences due to shortness of breath
- Has blue- or gray-tinged lips or nails
- Has strained neck and chest muscles with labored breathing
- Is breathing or panting rapidly
- Is extremely short of breath
- Is unable to walk, is listless and confused, or lacks energy

Medications

It's important to learn about medications that can help control your child's asthma.

- Long-term controller medications prevent attacks.
- Rescue medications treat acute asthma symptoms. Knowing how and when to use them correctly is key to making them effective.
- Inhalers are used to breathe medications by mouth.
- Nebulizers let very young children breathe medication in a vapor or mist.

Always use medications exactly as prescribed. Consult your provider or other qualified health care provider if you have any questions or concerns about your child's medications.