

ASTHMA ATTACK PREVENTION, PEDIATRIC



Although you may not be able to change the fact that your child has asthma, you can take actions to help your child prevent episodes of asthma (asthma attacks).

How can this condition affect my child?

Asthma attacks (flare ups) can cause your child trouble breathing, your child to have high-pitched whistling sounds when your child breathes, most often when your child breathes out (wheeze), and cause your child to cough. They may keep your child from doing activities he or she likes to do.

What can increase my child's risk?

Coming into contact with things that cause asthma symptoms (asthma triggers) can put your child at risk for an asthma attack. Common asthma triggers include:

- Things your child is allergic to (allergens), such as:
 - Dust mite and cockroach droppings.
 - Pet dander.
 - Mold.
 - Pollen from trees and grasses.
 - Food allergies. This might be a specific food or added chemicals called sulfites.
- Irritants, such as:
 - Weather changes including very cold, dry, or humid air.
 - Smoke. This includes campfire smoke, air pollution, and tobacco smoke.
 - Strong odors from aerosol sprays and fumes from perfume, candles, and household cleaners.
- Other triggers include:
 - Certain medicines. This includes NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen.
 - Viral respiratory infections (colds), including runny nose (rhinitis) or infection in the sinuses (sinusitis).
 - Activity including exercise, playing, laughing, or crying.
 - Not using inhaled medicines (corticosteroids) as told.

What actions can I take to protect my child from an asthma attack?

- Help your child stay healthy. Make sure your child is up to date on all immunizations as told by his or her

health care provider.

- Many asthma attacks can be prevented by carefully following your child's written asthma action plan.

Help your child follow an asthma action plan

Work with your child's health care provider to create an asthma action plan. This plan should include:

- A list of your child's asthma triggers and how to avoid them.
- A list of symptoms that your child may have during an asthma attack.
- Information about which medicine to give your child, when to give the medicine, and how much of the medicine to give.
- Information to help you understand your child's peak flow measurements.
- Daily actions that your child can take to control her or his asthma.
- Contact information for your child's health care providers.
- If your child has an asthma attack, act quickly. This can decrease how severe it is and how long it lasts.

Monitor your child's asthma.

- Teach your child to use the peak flow meter every day or as told by his or her health care provider.
 - Have your child record the results in a journal or record the information for your child.
 - A drop in peak flow numbers on one or more days may mean that your child is starting to have an asthma attack, even if he or she is not having symptoms.
- When your child has asthma symptoms, write them down in a journal. Note any changes in symptoms.
- Write down how often your child uses a fast-acting rescue inhaler. If it is used more often, it may mean that your child's asthma is not under control. Adjusting the asthma treatment plan may help.

Lifestyle

- Help your child avoid or reduce outdoor allergies by keeping your child indoors, keeping windows closed, and using air conditioning when pollen and mold counts are high.
- If your child is overweight, consider a weight-

management plan and ask your child's health care provider how to help your child safely lose weight.

- Help your child find ways to cope with their stress and feelings.
- **Do not** allow your child to use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. **Do not** smoke around your child. If you or your child needs help quitting, ask your health care provider.

Medicines

- Give over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your child's health care provider.
- **Do not** stop giving your child his or her medicine and do not give your child less medicine even if your child starts to feel better.
- Let your child's health care provider know:
 - How often your child uses his or her rescue inhaler.
 - How often your child has symptoms while taking regular medicines.
 - If your child wakes up at night because of asthma symptoms.
 - If your child has more trouble breathing when he or she is running, jumping, and playing.

Activity

- Let your child do his or her normal activities as told by his or her health care provider. Ask what activities are safe for your child.
- Some children have asthma symptoms or more asthma symptoms when they exercise. This is called exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB). If your child has this problem, talk with your child's health care provider about how to manage EIB. Some tips to follow include:
 - Have your child use a fast-acting rescue inhaler before exercise.
 - Have your child exercise indoors if it is very cold, humid, or the pollen and mold counts are high.
 - Tell your child to warm up and cool down before and after exercise.
 - Tell your child to stop exercising right away if his or her asthma symptoms or breathing gets worse.

At school

- Make sure that your child's teachers and the staff at

school know that your child has asthma.

- Meet with them at the beginning of the school year and discuss ways that they can help your child avoid any known triggers.
- Teachers may help identify new triggers found in the classroom such as chalk dust, classroom pets, or social activities that cause anxiety.
- Find out where your child's medication will be stored while your child is at school.
- Make sure the school has a copy of your child's written asthma action plan.

Where to find more information

- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: www.aafa.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov
- American Lung Association: www.lung.org
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- World Health Organization: www.who.int

Get help right away if:

- You have followed your child's written asthma action plan and your child's symptoms are not improving.

Summary

- Asthma attacks (flare ups) can cause your child trouble breathing, your child to have high-pitched whistling sounds when your child breathes, most often when your child breathes out (wheeze), and cause your child to cough.
- Work with your child's health care provider to create an asthma action plan.
- **Do not** stop giving your child his or her medicine and do not give your child less medicine even if your child seems to be feeling better.
- **Do not** allow your child to use any products that contain nicotine or tobacco. These products include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and vaping devices, such as e-cigarettes. **Do not** smoke around your child. If you or your child needs help quitting, ask your health care provider.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.