

Asthma Facts



- Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs.
- Every child feels differently when having asthma symptoms, but most often will have repeated coughing, wheezing, breathlessness and chest tightness. These symptoms are from swelling (inflammation) of the airways. This makes the airways very sensitive and they usually react strongly to certain things (called triggers) in the environment.
- There is no cure for asthma, but with proper care it can be controlled.

Triggers are things that start an asthma episode. These can be viruses or other things in the environment that stimulate the child's immune system and cause airways to become inflamed. Except for colds, which trigger asthma episodes in most young children, triggers that start asthma episodes are different for each child. Things that trigger one child will not bother another. Also, triggers can change as a child grows older. You can help by knowing what triggers the child's asthma and avoiding them to reduce the child's risk of having an episode. Triggers may include:

Triggers	Prevention
Respiratory illness, such as a cold or the flu <i>A cold is the most common trigger of asthma in young children.</i>	Follow proper hand washing procedures; clean and sanitize toys and surfaces; flu vaccination
Tobacco smoke	Do not allow smoking in child care areas. Do not wear clothing that smells like cigarette smoke.
Cockroach and rodent droppings	Keep kitchen area clean; seal cracks in and around pipes; seal mouse holes.
Mold	Prevent water leakage; inspect bathrooms often for mold.
Dust, dust mites	Control dust; vacuum after children leave; mop with wet/damp cloths.
Pet dander	Keep pets out of child care areas at all times.
Perfume	Don't use perfumes or other strongly scented products.
Emotions, such as excitement or anxiety	Avoid emotional extremes.
Exercise	Give medication before exercise, if instructed to so by the child's health care provider.
Grass and tree pollens	Talk to parents about the best ways to limit triggers while their child is outside and pollen levels are high. Control pollen in child care areas; vacuum after children leave; mop with damp/wet cloths.
Cold air, humidity and changes in weather	Proper clothing; avoid temperature extremes.

Early warning signs are mild symptoms that happen *before* an asthma episode. Being able to spot early warning signs is helpful because you can take quick action. Early action may decrease the seriousness of the attack or even prevent an asthma episode from happening at all. Early warning signs are different for every child, so knowing each child's specific early warning signs is important. Some common early warning signs are:

- behavior changes, such as nervousness;
- coughing;
- stuffy or runny nose;
- headache;
- fatigue;
- watery eyes, itchy throat or chin.

Signs and symptoms of an asthma episode:

- acting agitated or scared
- breathing rapidly or differently
- wheezing
- can't stop coughing
- having trouble breathing when lying down
- sitting with shoulders hunched over
- unusually pale skin

Management of an asthma episode:

- Remove the child from asthma triggers.
- Calm the child to reduce anxiety.
- Give medication as instructed by the child's health care provider.
(See the child's *Written Medication Consent Form*.)
- Call the child's parent or guardian.
- Follow the child's asthma care plan.
- Call 911, depending upon child's condition.