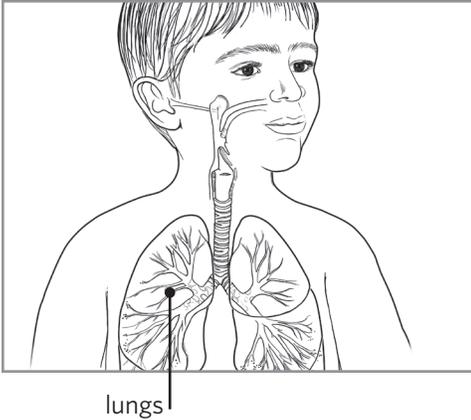


Asthma in Kids

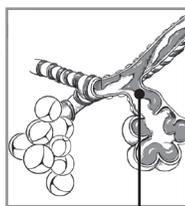


Asthma is a condition that affects your child's airways and makes it hard for him to breathe. While your child will always have asthma, he may only have symptoms some of the time. When he is having symptoms, it is called a flare-up. Because there isn't a cure for asthma, it's important to manage your child's condition, so he doesn't have flare-ups often.

During a flare-up, your child's body is not getting enough oxygen. The lining of his airways becomes swollen, which reduces the space for air to flow through. The airways also tighten and may become clogged with mucus (*see images below*).



Normal airways



Constricted, clogged airways

Know the Signs of Asthma

Asthma symptoms come and go, so your child won't have them all the time. If your child has asthma, he may have some of these signs:

- **a cough that won't go away**
- **frequent colds**
- **wheezing noises when he breathes**
- **trouble breathing, rapid breathing or shortness of breath**
- **difficulty breathing when exercising**
- **chest tightness**
- **long exhales of air**

If your child has any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor right away.

Asthma Tests

Your child will have asthma tests for two reasons: to diagnose asthma and to monitor his condition. Two common tests are:

1. **Spirometer**— checks for narrowing in your child's airways. It measures how much air comes out of his lungs when he exhales after taking a deep breath.
2. **Peak flow**— tells you if your child's airways are open, or if they're constricted and inflamed. Your doctor may recommend that you check your child's peak flow reading daily with a device called a peak flow meter.

Asthma Triggers

Triggers bring on an asthma flare-up. To find out what your child's triggers are, keep track of when he has flare-ups and what he was doing at the time. Then, take steps to avoid them. Triggers may include:

- **Upper respiratory infections**— including cold and flu, bronchitis or sinus infections. To help prevent these, teach your child to wash his hands frequently. You can also help your child avoid the flu by getting him a flu shot every year.
- **Irritants**— including cigarette smoke, wood smoke, strong odors such as perfumes or cleaning agents, air pollutants or fumes. Don't allow anyone to smoke around your child, and keep him inside on days when air pollution is high. (You can get air pollution levels on your local news.)
- **Weather**— including cold air, changes in humidity and temperature. Have your child wear a scarf over his mouth and nose when he's outside in the winter.



Asthma Action Plan

Work with your child's doctor to create an asthma action plan. This is a plan that lists your child's peak flow numbers, symptoms, triggers, instructions for treating flare-ups, medicines and emergency contact information. Share this plan with your child and his caregivers, including family, teachers and coaches.

You can print a sample plan online at www.familydoctor.org (search "asthma action plan").

- **Exercise**—including any physical activity, especially running. But it's important for your child to be active. If your child can't exercise because of asthma, talk to his doctor.
- **Strong displays of emotion**—including anxiety, crying, yelling and laughing hard, which can cause deep rapid breathing. Talk to your doctor for help if your child has trouble managing emotions.
- **Allergies**—including reactions to dust, pollen and pet dander. The same things that cause allergy symptoms can trigger asthma flare-ups. If your child has allergies, talk to his doctor about treatment options.

Treatment for Asthma

Your doctor will recommend the treatment options that are best for your child and the type of asthma he has. There are two types of medicine:

1. **Preventive medicines**—help reduce inflammation and tightening in your child's airways to prevent asthma symptoms.
2. **Quick-relief rescue medicines**—work quickly to open the airways by relaxing airway muscles. But they don't prevent future flare-ups. These are also called fast-acting inhalers.

Preventive medicines work over time to reduce swelling in the lungs, helping your child have fewer symptoms and flare-ups. They can also help decrease your child's reactions to some triggers. **For a preventive medicine to work effectively, your child needs to take it every day, even if he isn't having symptoms.** If your child's doctor prescribes a preventive medicine, your child will still need his quick-relief medicine in case he has a flare-up.



To learn more, visit

**HealthyAdvice.com/
AsthmaKids**

You can also visit these websites:

- **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology**
www.aaaai.org
- **American Lung Association**
www.lungusa.org
- **National Jewish Medical and Research Center**
www.nationaljewish.org

Remember:

- Identify and avoid triggers.
- Take all medicines as prescribed.
- Work with your child's doctor to create an asthma action plan, and share this plan with your child, your family and your child's caregivers.

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