

# Childhood asthma



## When kids have asthma

Asthma attacks can make it hard for kids to do normal things. They might have trouble sleeping, keeping up at school or even playing. A bad asthma attack can send a child to the hospital.<sup>1</sup>

### What happens during an asthma attack?

During an asthma attack, the airways and lungs become irritated, and they swell.<sup>1</sup> Muscles around the airways tighten. As the airways tighten and swell, less air gets through to the lungs. Asthma attacks can make people cough, wheeze and have trouble breathing.<sup>2</sup>

Asthma attacks happen when the body over-reacts to certain things. These things are called “triggers.” Some common triggers include:<sup>1,3</sup>

- Having a cold or other infection.
- Breathing tobacco smoke or polluted air.
- Being around things like dust mites, pet dander, mold or pollen (these are called allergens).
- Weather changes.
- Breathing cold, dry air.
- Physical activity, including normal play.
- Getting very excited, mad, scared or upset.

### Tips to help your kids stay active – and control their asthma<sup>4</sup>

- Take it easy. Start exercising slowly and finish with a cool-down.
- Stay away from things that trigger asthma.
- Take breaks. They can catch their breath, and remind them to drink lots of water.
- Mix it up. Try different activities, like skating or a long walk in the park.
- Check air quality first. Go online or watch the weather report on TV. Exercise outside only when the air is clean.

### What causes asthma?

Children with asthma have sensitive immune systems. A sensitive immune system can be a family trait. Other things that make a child more likely to have asthma include:<sup>1</sup>

- Having allergies or a family history of allergies.
- Living in an area with a lot of air pollution.
- Having a runny or stuffy nose all the time.
- Low birth weight (under 5.5 lbs.)
- Being overweight.
- Having heartburn or reflux.
- Having certain lung infections.



#### Sources:

- 1 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, *Childhood Asthma* (September 21, 2010): [mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com)
- 2 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, *Asthma Attack* (January 6, 2011): [mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com)
- 3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Asthma Control Program, *Asthma Fast Facts for Kids* (accessed March 16, 2011): [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- 4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Asthma: Kids* (July 12, 2012): [cdc.gov/asthma/children.html](http://cdc.gov/asthma/children.html)

## Kids with asthma can have healthy, normal lives if they stick to an asthma management plan.<sup>3</sup>

Your child’s pediatrician will help you make an asthma management plan. Usually a plan includes two kinds of medicine. One is a daily medicine to help control symptoms. The other is a rescue medicine in an inhaler, for stopping an asthma attack once it starts.<sup>1</sup>

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