



asthma

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways in the lungs. Children with asthma have sensitive lungs. The small airways of their lungs react as follows:

- The muscle around the airways tighten (spasm)
- The linings of the airways swell and become red and irritated (inflamed)
- The airways make too much mucus (phlegm)

All of this makes the airways become smaller (narrower), making it hard to breathe. Asthma is different from one child to another. Children with asthma may cough, wheeze (a whistling sound heard mostly on breathing out), or breathe fast. With time you will learn what is important to watch for in your child. Asthma does not spread from one person to another, but often there are other family members who have it. Children with asthma may also have other allergic conditions like hay fever or have had eczema as a baby.

WHAT MAKES ASTHMA WORSE?

The things which bring on asthma are called triggers. Swelling and tightness in the airways are caused by triggers. It is important to learn what your child's triggers are, and to keep your child away from them if you can. More than one trigger can make your child's asthma worse.

SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TRIGGERS ARE:

- colds or chest infections
- allergies such as:
 - animals
 - molds
 - dust
 - feathers
 - grass
 - pollens
 - foods
 - food additives
 - some medicines
 - exercise
 - very cold air
- irritants such as:

- smoke
- perfumes
- strong fumes
- sprays
- pollution

WHAT CAN I DO FOR MY CHILD'S ASTHMA?

Good control of your child's asthma is the goal of treatment. It is important to work together with your child's doctor because everyone's asthma is different.

AT THE FIRST SIGN OF BREATHING PROBLEMS:

- Remove your child from the cause of the problem as soon as possible
- Give the medicine prescribed by your doctor.
- Stay calm and reassure your child.
- Allow your child to sit in a comfortable position.
- Watch your child carefully.

WHAT MEDICINES ARE USED FOR ASTHMA?

Your doctor will prescribe the medicines which are best for your child. Medicines for asthma come in pill, liquid, inhaled, and mist form. Your doctor will prescribe the one(s) that are best for your child.

Information is continued on the back side of this sheet.

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asthma (continued)

There are two main kinds of medicine for asthma:

- Preventors (Qvan™, Pulmicort™, Flovent™)
- Relievers (Airomir,™ Bricanyl™, Ventolin™)

Preventors lessen inflammation (swelling and redness). They should be taken every day to prevent asthma signs or as your doctor tells you.

Relievers relax the muscles that have tightened around the airways. These medications are taken to control difficulty in breathing. Your doctor may suggest you have reliever medicine available for your child at all times; or that you give it before exercise or contact with triggers.

WHAT IS THE PEAK FLOW METER?

Some older children may be asked to use a Peak Flow Meter by their doctor. A peak flow meter measures how quickly air can be blown out of the lungs. It can help to recognize the early worsening of asthma. Peak Flow numbers may drop even before you notice breathing problems. This drop can help you decide that a visit to the doctor or changes in medicine may be needed.

WHAT IS GOOD ASTHMA CONTROL?

Control of your child's asthma means your child:

- Breathes normally most of the time.
- Sleeps through the night without coughing or wheezing, and has no signs of asthma upon awakening.
- Can attend school everyday.
- Can run, play, and have fun.
- Has no emergency visits or hospital stays because of asthma.
- Has normal breathing tests and peak flow readings.
- Has no unwanted effects from medicines and is not using relievers too much.

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