

Family Asthma Guide

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease characterized by repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing. Asthma attacks are caused by lung inflammation and a sudden narrowing of the small airways in the lungs in response to asthma triggers.

Asthma symptoms come and go. Some people have fewer symptoms as they get older. You may not have symptoms for a long time but they can come back at any time. Be ready to act quickly.

Asthma affects people differently. Some people experience symptoms when they exercise or when they get a cold. Others have symptoms every day. Some people have worse symptoms only at certain times of the year.

There is no cure for asthma, however, you CAN work with your doctor to experience fewer symptoms.

Symptoms

- Cough
- Wheezing
- Out of Breath
- Chest Tightness
- Fatigue/Tiredness

How bad is my asthma?

Your doctor will classify your asthma based on how often you have symptoms or how sick you get. Ask your doctor what category of asthma you have.

Well-Controlled
No symptoms

Not Well-Controlled
Some symptoms

Very Poorly Controlled
Many symptoms

Triggers

Triggers are substances or situations that can affect your asthma. Exposure to an asthma trigger can activate your asthma symptoms or make them worse. Different people have different triggers.

Common triggers include:

- **Indoor:** Dust/dust mites; cats, dogs, or other animals; rats or mice; cockroaches; mold
- **Outdoor:** Pollen; plants, flowers, grass, or trees; changes in weather or seasons
- **Irritants:** Cigarette smoke; strong smells (like cleaning products or perfumes); air pollution or smog
- **Other:** Stress or worry; colds or sickness; exercise or play, food allergies; cold air

Asthma Attacks

An asthma attack occurs when your asthma symptoms become out-of-control making you feel sick. It is important to be alert to the symptoms of a serious asthma attack.

When your symptoms become out-of-control, seek help immediately.

What asthma control means for you

- No problem playing and exercising
- Better sleep throughout the night
- No school absences caused by asthma
- No hospital stays
- Fewer or no visits to the emergency department
- Fewer or no medication side effects

What are YOUR goals for asthma control?



Asthma Action Plan

Please take this form to your next physician visit

Name:

Emergency Contact:

Doctor:

Doctor's Phone:

GO		Use these daily controller medicines:			
You have <i>all</i> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breathing is good No cough or wheeze Sleep through the night Can work & play 	Medicine	How Much	How Often/When		
	For asthma with exercise, take:				

Controller medicines reduce inflammation in your airways, making the airways less likely to react to your asthma triggers. When used every day, you will experience fewer symptoms and they will help you when you are around one of your triggers.

CAUTION		Continue with green zone medicine and add:			
You have <i>any</i> of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First signs of a cold Exposure to known trigger Cough Mild wheeze Tight Chest Coughing at night 	Medicine	How Much	How Often/When		
	Call your asthma care provider.				

Fast-acting medicines are also called rescue medicines. They act quickly to relax tightened muscles around your airways. Use them at first sign of any asthma symptoms, or about half an hour before you are going to be around one of your triggers.

DANGER		Take these medicines and call your doctor now.			
Your asthma is getting worse fast: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicine is not helping Breathing is hard & fast Nose opens wide Trouble speaking Ribs show 	Medicine	How Much	How Often/When		

GET HELP FROM A DOCTOR NOW! Your doctor will want to see you right away. It's important!
 If you cannot contact your doctor, go directly to the emergency room. **DO NOT WAIT.**
 Make an appointment with your asthma care provider within two days of an ER visit or hospitalization.