

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease. There is no cure, but asthma can be well controlled so that your child can be healthy and join in all of their favorite activities.

Asthma causes the airways (breathing tubes in the lungs) to get smaller making it hard to breathe.

Common symptoms of asthma are:

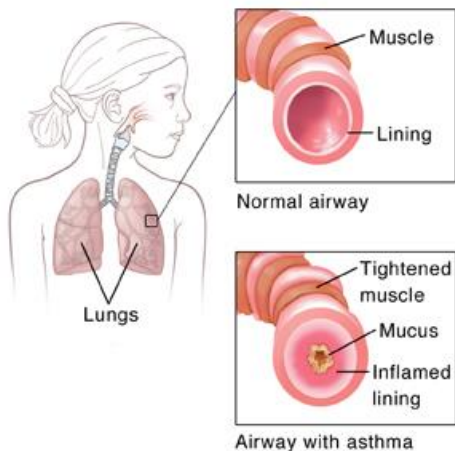
- coughing
- wheezing
- chest tightness and
- trouble breathing

These symptoms are ongoing and get better with asthma medicines.

How does asthma make it hard to breathe?

Asthma affects your child's airways in three ways:

1. **Swelling (inflammation)** inside of the airway means there is less room for air to get in and out.
2. **Bronchospasm** is when the muscles around the airway tighten down. This also means there is less room for air to get in and out.
3. **Too much mucus** is made and it can block the airways.



What are triggers and how do they cause an asthma attack?

Lots of things can cause an asthma attack. The things that cause asthma attacks are called triggers.

Each child has different triggers for their asthma. Some common triggers are:

- cigarette (tobacco, marijuana, e-cig) smoke
- colds and other viruses that affect the nose, throat, airways and lungs
- exercise
- perfumes and other strong smells
- cold air, weather changes
- air pollution
- worry, stress, emotions
- pollen, dust, molds, and animal dander can trigger asthma in children with allergies

Medicines

Medicines are used to treat asthma. They make symptoms better by lessening swelling and bronchospasm. There are three main types of medicine for asthma.

1. **Quick relief inhalers**, like albuterol or levalbuterol, quickly relax the muscles around the airways and should make the asthma attack better within 5-10 minutes. These medicines are also called bronchodilators.
2. **Controller medicines** can be either inhaled steroids or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicines. They need to be taken every day, even when your child feels good, because they prevent asthma symptoms and attacks. These medicines help to lessen swelling inside the airways but they won't work quickly enough to stop symptoms during an asthma attack.
3. **Oral steroids** may be needed for asthma symptoms that don't get better with albuterol alone.

All medications may have side effects. Tell your child's doctor about any worries you have about side effects from your child's medicines. It is very important to follow the directions on when and how to use your child's asthma medicines to keep asthma well-controlled.

Asthma Control

Asthma is well controlled when:

- Your child can run and play as much as they want.
- Your child doesn't miss school or work or activities.
- Your child sleeps well at night.
- You can't remember the last time your child had to visit the ER for asthma.

Remember the Rules of Two® to check for asthma control:

Does your child:

- Have asthma symptoms or take their quick-relief inhaler more than two times a week?
- Wake up at night with asthma symptoms more than two times a month?
- Refill their quick relief inhaler more than two times a year?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then your child's asthma is not well controlled. Please talk with your child's doctor.

Follow your Asthma Action Plan and Get EMERGENCY CARE for asthma if your child has these symptoms→

- It's hard to breathe while walking or talking.
- The muscles in your child's neck, chest or ribs are pulling in or your child's nostrils are flaring with each breath.
- The quick relief inhaler isn't working and your child is getting worse.
- If your child's peak air flow is below 50% of their normal.
- Your child's skin, or lips look blue, if they pass out from asthma or if they cannot breathe. If this happens, call 911 right away.

The Rules of Two® is a registered trademark of Baylor Health Care System.

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