

Five things parents need to know about asthma



Children'sSM
Healthcare of Atlanta

Tips from a pediatric emergency specialist

Parents play a key role in helping their child keep asthma symptoms under control. The pediatric emergency specialists at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta have some simple tips so that parents can help children live active lives with asthma.

1. Think about symptoms, not labels.

Asthma is a condition that may cause your child to wheeze and have breathing problems. Doctors refer to it by many names. Asthma is also called an acute bronchospasm or reactive airway disease (RAD). Some doctors may not want to diagnose a child with a asthma. But, to help your child manage his asthma, you need to know how serious it is.

2. Know your child's triggers and how to avoid them.

Triggers are things that can make your child's asthma symptoms worse. Every child with asthma has different triggers. Some common triggers are:

- Cigarette smoke
- Pollen, mold or dust mites
- Colds or flu
- High ozone levels
- Exercise
- Pet dander

To help your child avoid triggers, have him:

- Stay away from cigarette smoke and clothes that smell like smoke.
- Stay inside when the pollen or ozone levels are high.
- Sneeze into his shirt sleeve.
- Wash his hands throughout the day.

3. Make sure your child always has his inhaler.

If your child has asthma, his doctors may prescribe a rescue inhaler, such as Albuterol or Xopenex. An inhaler has medicine that will help your child breathe easier. Your child will need his rescue inhaler when he has an asthma flare-up or asthma attack.

- Make sure he always has it with him—at home, school and anytime he is away from home.
- He needs the rescue inhaler for attacks.
- Have him use a spacer with the inhaler so the medicine gets into his lungs, not his mouth.
- The sooner the rescue medicine is used, the better it will work.
- Keep up with medicine refills so he always has medicine in case of an asthma attack.

4. Asthma is a serious condition that needs to be managed by a doctor.

Parents cannot manage asthma alone. If your child has breathing problems, he needs the right care. A doctor can watch your child's symptoms and make changes to his treatment plan as needed. If your child has a hospital stay for asthma, talk with your primary care doctor about a referral to a specialist.

Signs your child needs a new asthma treatment plan:

- He uses a rescue inhaler more than two times in one month
- He has been treated at an urgent care center or emergency department more than three times in one year
- He needs oral steroids

5. Know when to take your child to the emergency department.

The specialists in pediatric emergency departments are trained to treat children having serious asthma attacks.

Take your child to an emergency department when:

- His rescue medicine is not helping his breathing
- He needs his rescue medicine more than every four hours to control his symptoms



Visit choa.org/asthma for more information.