

Asthma: Helping Your Child

How can asthma affect your child's life?

Asthma is a challenging condition that can affect all areas of your child's life. But many children have asthma and handle it very well.

Although asthma may last through your child's life, treatment can help control it and keep your child healthy. Many children with asthma play sports and most live healthy, active lives. You can help your child feel better, do more, and avoid emergencies and long-term problems.

How can you help your child cope with asthma?

Educate yourself and your child about asthma. You can learn to control symptoms and reduce the risk of your child having asthma attacks. Discuss with your doctor any fears or concerns you or your child may have about asthma or treatment.

Work with your child's doctor to make an asthma action plan, and teach your child how to follow it. This helps you and your child know what daily medicines to take and what to do during an asthma attack. Teach your child about his or her asthma medicines.

Set goals for your child's quality of life. Decide together what you want to be able to do. Have symptom-free nights? Be active? Know you both can deal with an asthma attack? Work with your child's doctor on your goals.

Make treatment part of daily activities. This helps your child adjust to asthma and take responsibility for managing treatment. For



example, your child could take daily controller medicine before brushing his or her teeth.

Give encouragement

Let your child know you're proud of him or her for managing asthma. Be there to listen and give support. Encourage your child to be active, play, and do what other kids do. Asthma does not have to hold your child back.

Staying on track

Your child may have many caregivers, which can make it hard to follow a treatment plan.

- Print a calendar with your child's schedule and write who is responsible on each day. See that all caregivers have a schedule.
- Make sure all your child's caregivers understand what to do if your child has asthma symptoms.
- Teach your child to work with caregivers to manage his or her asthma.

Taking medicines is an important part of

asthma treatment. Find ways to help your child remember, such as taping notes on the bathroom mirror or making a checklist.

If your child is not able to visit friends who have pets, invite those friends to your home instead. Visitors may carry pet allergens on their clothes, so your child may need to increase the use of asthma controller medicines during visits. Talk to your child's doctor before changing the dose of any medicines.

Tips for helping teens

Teens may feel like asthma cuts into their freedom or sets them apart from their friends. You can help your teen stay with treatment and feel better about it. Help your teen to:

- Meet with the doctor alone. This helps your teen take charge of his or her care.
- Make a daily treatment plan that lets him or her do activities, such as sports or music.
- Remember that treatment will help him or her lead an active, normal life. Remind your teen that asthma is only one part of life.
- Know the dangers of smoking and being around smoke. Smoking is bad for teens, especially teens with asthma.
- Meet other teens with asthma for support.

How can you help your child deal with asthma at school?

Tell your child's principal, school nurse, teachers, and coaches that your child has asthma. Give the staff a copy of your child's

asthma action plan so they can help your child take his or her medicine and will know what to do during an asthma attack.

Children may worry that they can't be in sports or band, or worry about having an asthma attack at school or around friends. But if your child uses medicines and keeps symptoms under control, he or she will probably be able to do activities and will have fewer, less severe asthma attacks. Discuss activities and any symptoms your child is having.

Taking medicines

Your child may be embarrassed about taking medicine at school. It may help if your child can take the medicine at home or be allowed to keep the medicine with him or her at school. But at times your child may need to go to the school nurse or office to take medicine.

To help your child remember to take his or her medicine at school:

- Make sure teachers, coaches, and other staff know how important it is that your child takes his or her medicine.
- Try to find one person in the school who will check that your child takes the medicine.
- Ask your child's friends to help remind your child to take the medicine.

Do you have any questions or concerns after reading this information? It's a good idea to write them down and take them to your next doctor visit.