



Asthma in Children

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Treatment Overview

Asthma is treated with medicine to help your child breathe easier, along with self-care. Other treatments, like counseling, may also be used.

It's very important to treat your child's asthma, even if your child feels good most of the time. That's because mild asthma may also cause changes to the airways that speed up and make worse the natural decrease in lung function that occurs as we age.

Babies and small children need early treatment for asthma symptoms to prevent severe breathing problems. They may have more serious problems than adults because their bronchial tubes are smaller.

By following your child's treatment plan, you can help your child meet these goals:

- Increase lung function by treating the inflammation in the lungs.
- Reduce how often your child has asthma attacks, how long they last, and how bad they get.
- Treat the attacks as they occur.
- Have a full life by preventing and managing symptoms. This means being able to take part in all daily activities, including school, exercise, and recreation.
- Sleep through the night undisturbed by asthma symptoms.

Medicines

Most medicines for asthma are inhaled. These types of medicines go straight to your child's airways, where the problem is.

The main medicines used to treat asthma include:

Controller medicines.

These medicines prevent asthma attacks, help stop problems before they happen, and reduce inflammation in your child's lungs. These things help control your child's asthma.

Inhaled corticosteroids are the preferred controller medicines. The controller inhaler may also include a long-acting medicine that relaxes the airways to help your child breathe. Your child takes them every day.

Quick-relief medicines.

These medicines are used when symptoms can't be prevented and need to be treated fast. Talk to your doctor if your child needs their quick-relief medicine more than 2 days a week within a month.

They help relax the airways and allow your child to breathe easier. Albuterol is a quick-relief medicine that is often used. In some cases, a certain type of controller inhaler is used as a quick-relief medicine. Ask your child's doctor what to use for quick relief.

Oral or injected corticosteroids.

These medicines are often used to treat asthma attacks.

Other medicines may be given in some cases.

Your child needs to have regular checkups to keep asthma under control and to ensure the right treatment. How often your child needs checkups depends on how well the asthma is controlled.

Self-care

Treatment also includes things you can help your child do to manage asthma, like avoiding things that might trigger symptoms and following an asthma action plan.

Other treatments

Other treatments may be used to treat asthma. They include:

Counseling.

In addition to taking medicines, counseling may be helpful for children who have asthma. Therapy can help to improve anxiety triggers and learn how to manage stress.

Complementary medicine.

Complementary medicine is a term used for a wide variety of health care practices that may be used along with standard medical treatment.

While most mind and body practices such as breathing exercises and yoga seem to be safe when used in the right way, be sure to check with your child's doctor first. Talk about any complementary health practice that you would like your child to try or that your child is already using. Your doctor can help you manage your child's health better if they have the whole picture about your child's health.

Immunotherapy.

If your child has asthma symptoms that are triggered by allergens, the doctor may recommend immunotherapy. For this treatment, your child gets shots that have a small amount of certain allergens in them. Your child's body "gets used to" the allergen, so your child reacts less to it over time. This kind of treatment may help prevent or reduce some allergy symptoms.

Allergy shots have been shown to reduce asthma symptoms and the need for medicines in some people. But allergy shots don't work equally well for all allergens. These shots should not be given when asthma is not well-controlled.

Learn more

- Allergies: Should I Take Allergy Shots?
- Allergy Shots for Asthma
- Treating Asthma in Babies and Younger Children

Credits

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