

ASTHMA FACT SHEET

What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease that narrows the airways and makes it hard to breathe. Asthma is one of the most common causes of missed school days. Your child may have trouble sleeping because of asthma. It can also make it hard to play or exercise.

But with medication, asthma can be well controlled and your child should be able to **sleep and play without difficulty**.

What is a trigger?

A **trigger** is something that makes asthma start up or get worse. A trigger could be dust, animals, pollen, plants, smoke, strong smells, air pollution, exercise, food allergies or stress. Different people have different triggers. Knowing your child's triggers will help you manage their asthma. Your child's doctor can help you figure out what they are.

Signs and Symptoms

Asthma is not the same for every child. Some symptoms come and go. The most common symptoms are:

- Coughing
- Wheezing (this is a whistling sound that may be heard while your child is breathing)
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath while your child is playing or exercising
- Chest tightness (your child may say his/her chest hurts or does not feel good)
- Fatigue/ Tiredness
- Nighttime cough
- Loud breathing

Treatment

There are two kinds of medicine to treat asthma: relievers and controllers.

Relievers work to relax tight muscles around the airways. A reliever should be used for quick relief of asthma symptoms.

Controllers work to reduce irritation, swelling, and mucus that block airways. Controllers do not give quick relief. Controllers should be used every day, and help to prevent asthma symptoms. Talk to your child's doctor to make sure you have the right medicines, and that you and your child know how and when to use them.

What can you do?

You should take your child to the doctor as soon as possible if they have one or more symptoms of asthma. You can talk to the doctor about how to best treat asthma, and create an asthma action plan. Acting early can keep symptoms from getting worse.

