



# My child has **asthma**

A pocket guide for parents

# EMERGENCY INFORMATION

POISON CONTROL HOTLINE 212-222-1222

## YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_ a.m. - \_\_\_ p.m.

## YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_ a.m. - \_\_\_ p.m.

## PHARMACY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Hours \_\_\_ a.m. - \_\_\_ p.m.

Your Local Police Precinct \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

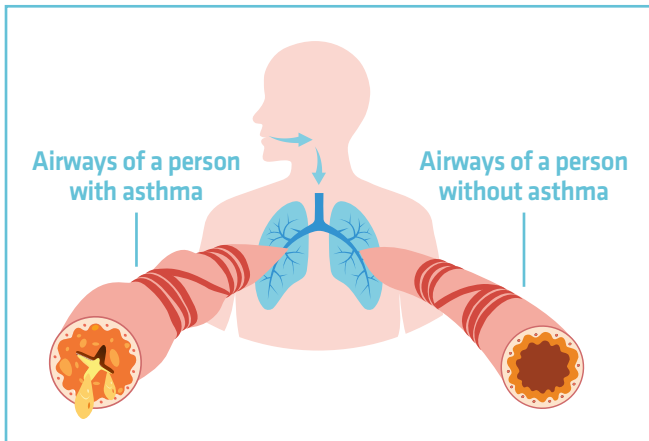
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

# What is asthma?

Asthma is a lifelong lung disease that makes it difficult to breathe.

## A PERSON WITH ASTHMA HAS:

- Swelling of the airways
- Mucus in the airways
- Tightening of muscles around the airways



**ASTHMA CANNOT BE CURED, BUT IT CAN BE CONTROLLED.**

People with asthma can live active, healthy lives.

## Keep your child's asthma under control



Schedule regular visits with your child's health care provider.

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Follow the asthma action plan that your health care provider gave you.

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Make sure your child takes their asthma medicines as prescribed.

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Have your health care provider complete the Medication Administration Form (MAF). This form allows the school to give your child their asthma medication. You can find the MAF online by visiting [schools.nyc.gov](https://schools.nyc.gov) and searching **MAF**. Return the completed MAF to your child's school nurse.

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Keep your home free of things that may trigger your child's asthma – like tobacco smoke, cockroaches, strong smells and pets.

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Get your child a flu vaccine as soon as possible. People with asthma are at a higher risk for flu complications.



## You and your child's health care provider

Developing a relationship with your child's health care provider is important. By becoming an active partner in your child's care, you and the provider can – together – come up with the best plan for controlling your child's asthma.

### **YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER SHOULD:**

- Explain your child's asthma in terms that you understand
- Explain when and how to give your child their asthma medicine
- Talk to you with respect
- Answer your questions
- Speak in a language you understand (or arrange for someone to interpret)
- Be available to talk to you by phone
- Give you a telephone number to call if you need to reach a provider when the office is closed

If you need help finding a health care provider, **CALL 311.**



## YOU SHOULD:

**Make a list of questions** before your child's appointment and talk about them with your health care provider during the visit.

**Clearly describe** your child's asthma symptoms.

**Ask the provider to explain** more clearly if you don't understand something they are saying.

**Bring along the medicines** your child takes and show them to the provider.

**Share your beliefs and ideas** about your child's asthma.

# Follow your child's asthma action plan

Your health care provider should complete an asthma action plan for your child.

## THIS WRITTEN PLAN WILL HELP YOU:

- Determine how well controlled your child's asthma is
- Know which asthma medicines to give, how much to give and when to give them
- Know when to call your health care provider or take your child to the emergency room
- Know how well your child is breathing based on the peak flow meter reading

**Asthma Action Plan**  
(To be completed by Health Care Provider)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency Contact/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
Health Care Provider Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Asthma Severity:  Intermittent  Mild Persistent  Moderate Persistent  Severe Persistent  
Asthma Triggers:  Colds  Exercise  Animals  Dust  Smoke  Food  Weather  Other

**Medication Record #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Last Used On:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If Feeling Well (Green Zone)**  
You have all of these:  
• Breathing is good  
• No cough or wheeze  
• Can work / play  
• Sleeps at night

Peak flow in this area: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**Take Every Day Long-Term Control Medication**

MEDICINE:	HOW MUCH:	WHEN TO TAKE IT:

5-15 minutes before exercise use this medicine

**If Not Feeling Well (Yellow Zone)**  
You have 2/3 of these:  
• Cough  
• Wheeze  
• Night sleep  
• Coughing at night

Peak flow in this area: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**Take Every Day Medication and Add These Quick-Relief Medication**

MEDICINE:	HOW MUCH:	WHEN TO TAKE IT:

Call doctor if these medicines are used more than two days a week

**If Feeling Very Sick (Red Zone)**  
Your asthma is getting worse fast:  
• Breathing is not helping  
• Sneezing or very bad cough  
• Night open often  
• Can't walk or talk well  
• Wake often

Peak flow reading below: \_\_\_\_\_

**SEEK EMERGENCY CARE or CALL 911 NOW if: Lips are blue, Getting worse fast, Hard to breathe, Can't talk or cry because of hard breathing or has passed out**

Make an appointment with your primary care provider within two days of an ER visit or hospitalization

Doctor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

**IF YOUR CHILD DOES NOT HAVE AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN,** ask the provider to complete one at your next visit. Call 311 if you need a copy of this form.

# Know your child's **symptoms**

Asthma symptoms can differ from one child to the next. Here are some common symptoms.

## **YOUR CHILD MAY EXPERIENCE SOME OR ALL OF THESE SYMPTOMS:**

### **COUGHING**

A regular cough or a sound in your child's chest. It may keep your child awake at night.

### **WHEEZING**

A whistling sound like air coming out of a balloon.

### **SHORTNESS OF BREATH**

When your child is having a hard time breathing.

### **FATIGUE**

Your child tires quickly, even when getting enough sleep.

### **TIGHTNESS IN THEIR CHEST**

Chest feels tight or heavy. Your child may say that it hurts or feels like something is putting pressure on their chest.



# Asthma medicines

There are **TWO** main types of asthma medicines.

**1.**

**CONTROLLER MEDICINES** (inhaled corticosteroids) reduce swelling and mucus in the airways. They are taken daily when a child is diagnosed with persistent asthma or when symptoms occur often.

**COMMONLY USED CONTROLLERS INCLUDE:**

- Flovent
- Pulmicort
- Advair
- Symbicort
- Asmanex
- Singulair



**2.**













**RELIEVER MEDICINES** (albuterol) relax the airway muscles so they stay open and wide. Reliever medicines should be taken when your child has asthma symptoms or when you expect your child to be in contact with an asthma trigger.

The asthma action plan provided by your child's health care provider describes the medicines your child needs to take and when they need to take them.

Use a spacer whenever using an inhaler. Spacers help the medication reach the lungs more effectively.

# What are your child's asthma triggers?

Asthma triggers are things that can bring on asthma symptoms.  
**HERE ARE SOME COMMON TRIGGERS:**

 Colds and infections	 Weather changes	 Pollen	 Dust
 Dust mites	 Tobacco smoke	 Cockroaches	 Food allergies
 Pets	 Mold	 Pollution	 Mice

Many children with asthma also have allergies that can trigger asthma symptoms. **Ask your health care provider if your child has allergies.**

# Reduce your child's contact with **triggers**

## **SECONDHAND SMOKE**

- If you smoke, ask your health care provider for help quitting and call **866-NYQUITS (866-697-8487)** for more information. Share this quitline with your family members who smoke, too.
- Do not allow smoking in your home.

## **ANIMAL DANDER**

- Keep pets with fur or hair out of the home.
- If it is not possible to keep them outside, keep them out of your child's bedroom and keep the bedroom door closed.

## **DUST and DUST MITES**

- Regularly mop and vacuum your home.
- Use wet cloths to wipe away dust.

## **COCKROACHES**

- Keep all food out of the bedroom.
- Keep food and garbage in closed containers and never leave food out.
- Clean regularly, using mild soaps and cleaning products such as white vinegar and baking soda. Avoid strong-smelling cleaning products with ammonia or bleach.
- Caulk cracks and holes where roaches can enter and hide.
- For pest management services, call **888-247-8811**.

## **MOLD and MILDEW**

- Fix leaking faucets, pipes or other sources of water.
- Clean moldy surfaces with mild soaps and cleaning products.
- Use air conditioners.
- Avoid humidifiers.



## Staying active when you have asthma

All children, including those with asthma, need to stay active. Don't let asthma get in the way of your child's physical activity.

- **Ask your child's health care provider** whether your child should take a reliever medicine before participating in sports, gym class or other types of physical activity (for example, playing in the park or riding a bike).
- **Review the exercise section** of your child's asthma action plan with their provider.
- **Give a copy of the asthma action plan** to your child's teachers, school nurse and coaches so that they understand your child's medicine needs.

# Managing stress

Caring for a child with asthma can be stressful.  
**HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS:**

Find someone you can talk to. Reach out to a family member, a friend or a neighbor who can listen to your concerns and offer support.

Listen to music.

Read a book together.

Work on an art project or puzzle with your child.

Go for a walk.

Talk to a staff member at the East Harlem Asthma Center of Excellence.

Contact NYC Well at 1-888-NYC-WELL (1-888-692-9355), or text "WELL" to 65173, for free, confidential mental health support.

## Common asthma terms

<b>Asthma Episode</b>	When airways swell, mucus fills the airways and muscles around the airways tighten making it difficult to breathe – also known as an asthma attack
<b>Bronchioles</b>	Airways inside the lungs
<b>Bronchodilator</b>	Quick relief medicine to be taken when a child has asthma symptoms or half an hour before being exposed to a known asthma trigger (for example, before visiting a home with pets)
<b>Dust Mites</b>	Tiny insects found in every home that can cause allergies and trigger asthma symptoms
<b>Inhaled Corticosteroid</b>	Control medicine used every day as prescribed by a health care provider to help reduce swelling and mucus inside the airways
<b>Inflammation</b>	Swelling
<b>Peak Flow Meter</b>	A handheld device that lets you see how well the lungs are working
<b>Spacer</b>	A plastic tube that attaches to an inhaler and helps deliver medicine to the lungs
<b>Spirometer</b>	A machine that lets a health care provider see, in more detail, how the lungs are working
<b>Triggers</b>	Things that bring on asthma symptoms

# During an asthma emergency

If your child has any of these symptoms – and reliever medicine (albuterol) isn't making it better – it is an emergency:

- Difficulty breathing
- Trouble talking
- Trouble walking or moving at all
- Blue lips or nails
- Heavy wheezing or coughing

Your child may also experience chest tightness and/or dizziness.

## Quickly take these steps:

### STEP 1

**CALL 911** for emergency help.

### STEP 2

**CONTINUE TO GIVE RELIEVER MEDICINE** (albuterol) as directed on your child's asthma action plan.

### STEP 3

**TRY TO CALM YOUR CHILD** by speaking softly and using comforting words. Help your child to a comfortable sitting position while you wait for the ambulance to arrive.

# Asthma resources

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## LOCAL

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EAST HARLEM  
**ASTHMA CENTER**  
OF EXCELLENCE

**New York City Department of Health and  
Mental Hygiene**

**161-169 East 110th St.**

(between Lexington and Third Avenues)

**New York, NY 10029**

**888-247-8811**

**[nyc.gov/health/asthma](http://nyc.gov/health/asthma)**

**a.i.r. (Asthma Intervention and Relief) NYC**

**349 East 149th St., Suite 405**

**Bronx, NY 10451**

**718-577-2794**

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## NATIONAL

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**American Lung Association**

**800-LUNGUSA (800-586-4872)**

**[lung.org](http://lung.org)**

**Allergy and Asthma Network**

**Mothers of Asthmatics**

**800-878-4403**

**[allergyasthmanetwork.org](http://allergyasthmanetwork.org)**