

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY *and* YOUR CHILD'S ASTHMA

## WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

"Physical activity" is any form of movement that requires you to expend energy and use large muscle groups. Regular physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, helps maintain and control weight, and promotes emotional well-being. The best type of activity is the kind you enjoy!

### Physical activities include:

- Jumping rope
- Biking or roller skating
- Swimming
- Walking or running
- Playing soccer or basketball
- Playing handball or tag
- Climbing stairs
- Housework or yardwork

Healthy children need around 60 minutes of activity every day. Healthy adults should try to be active for 30 minutes on most days of the week. You can spread this activity out over the day (for example, in shorter periods of 10 to 15 minutes each).

People with asthma should be active too. Get asthma under control so it doesn't hold you back.

To learn more,  
call 311 and ask for Asthma

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Asthma Initiative

### Sources:

Disabella V, Sherman C. Exercise for asthma patients. *The Physician and Sportsmedicine* 1998; 26(6):75-84.  
Patrick K, Spear B, Holt K, Sofka D, eds. Physical activity issues and concerns: Asthma. In: *Bright Futures in Practice: Physical Activity*. 2001; Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, pp. 87-91.



NEW YORK CITY  
**ASTHMA**  
INITIATIVE

## WHAT IS ASTHMA?

- Asthma is a lung disease; asthma cannot be cured but it can be controlled.
- During an asthma episode (or asthma "attack") the airways in the lungs get swollen, clogged, and squeezed.
- A person who is having an asthma episode may cough, wheeze, have trouble breathing, and feel a tightness in the chest.
- An asthma trigger is something that irritates the lungs of a person who has asthma.
- Everyone has their own triggers, but some triggers, like secondhand smoke, are common to nearly all people with asthma.
- Asthma episodes happen when a trigger, like smoke, gets into the lungs of a person who has asthma.

## HOW DOES ASTHMA AFFECT YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITY?

All children like to run and play and have fun. But if asthma is poorly controlled, it can get in the way.

In order for children to participate fully and safely in sports and other physical activities, asthma needs to be under control.

Asthma can be controlled by avoiding asthma triggers and by taking the right medicines at the right times.

When asthma is under control, children with asthma can live an active, healthy life. Children with asthma can do anything: play sports at home and at school, jump rope, swim, ride a bike and HAVE FUN!

FOR MORE  
INFORMATION  
CALL 311  
AND ASK FOR ASTHMA  
OR  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
[WWW.NYC.GOV/  
HEALTH/ASTHMA](http://WWW.NYC.GOV/HEALTH/ASTHMA)

If your child has asthma, here is what you can do to help him or her **get healthy and get active**:

1. Visit the doctor regularly and know about the two kinds of medicine:  
**long-term control**, to prevent symptoms over the long-term, and **quick relief** to help relieve symptoms.
2. Ask the doctor to fill out an **Asthma Action Plan** that explains how and when to take the different medicines. Ask if quick relief medicine should be taken before physical activities. To order an **Asthma Action Plan**, call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health/asthma](http://nyc.gov/health/asthma).
3. Ask your doctor what physical activity is appropriate for your child. Make sure asthma does not interfere with your child's ability to be active.
4. Give a copy of the **Asthma Action Plan** to teachers and coaches so they know your child might need to take quick relief medicine before sports, gym class, or other physical activities.
5. Find the activities you enjoy and be active as a family. Play at the park, go for a walk, ride bikes, go dancing, and turn off the TV for a day.