

# ASTHMA

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



### WHAT IS ASTHMA?



As we breathe, air flows in and out of our lungs through airways.



Asthma makes airways tight and swollen and causes mucus build up.

### SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA



WHEEZING



CHEST TIGHTNESS

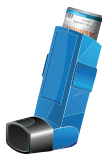


SHORTNESS OF BREATH



FREQUENT COUGHING

### MEDICATIONS TO TREAT ASTHMA



#### Relievers/Rescue

- Works fast to relax tight airway muscles
- Comes in blue puffers

#### Preventers/Controllers



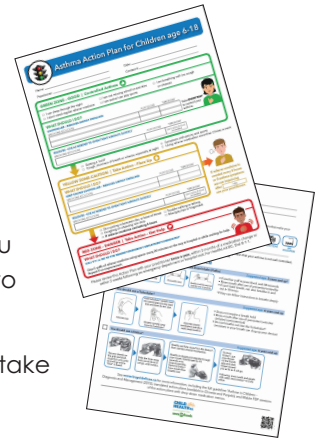
- Often called inhaled corticosteroids
- Treats and prevents ongoing swelling and reduces mucus
- Takes several weeks to fully work
- Needs to be taken even when there are no symptoms to prevent an asthma attack
- Puffers often come in different colours (orange, red, and tan) but could also be a pill

### ACTION PLAN

Every child with asthma should have an action plan.

The action plan is a tool that you create with your care provider to help control asthma.

It tells you what medications to take and when to get help.



### WHEN TO GET HELP

If your child is having asthma symptoms, follow the yellow zone of the action plan. Use your reliever medication (often a blue puffer) as prescribed.

It's important to see your health care provider if the reliever medicine is needed every 4 hours for 1 day, or if asthma symptoms are not improving.

#### Does your child:

- have non-stop coughing or wheezing?
- have skin sucking in at the base of the throat?
- have trouble walking or talking?
- need reliever medicine more than every 4 hours?



This is the red zone of the action plan: go to the nearest emergency department.

Use your reliever medication 5 puffs every 20 minutes on the way to the hospital if needed.

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## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1 WHAT CAUSES ASTHMA ATTACKS?

Most asthma in children is triggered by viruses such as the common cold or flu.

Some children have allergies to things in the environment that make their asthma worse.



### 2 WHAT CAN I CHANGE IN MY ENVIRONMENT TO PREVENT ASTHMA ATTACKS?

Avoid tobacco, cannabis or vaping smoke and get a flu shot every year to prevent the most common triggers in childhood asthma.

Some children have other triggers such as pets, and removal of those triggers can help.



### 3 EXERCISE TRIGGERS MY CHILD'S ASTHMA SYMPTOMS. HOW CAN WE MINIMIZE THIS?

The goal is for children to enjoy physical activity without being slowed down by asthma.

Having asthma symptoms while exercising can be a sign of poor asthma control. Make sure controller medication is being taken as prescribed.

Doing a warm up first or covering the nose and mouth when exercising in cold weather can help.



### 4 IS THERE A CURE FOR ASTHMA?

There is no cure for asthma at this time. However, asthma medications work well to control asthma symptoms when they are taken as prescribed by your health care provider.



### 5 DO CHILDREN OUTGROW ASTHMA?

For most people, asthma is a life-long condition. Children under the age of 5 are most likely to outgrow their symptoms.

Asthma symptoms can disappear during adolescence but return in adulthood.



### 6 ARE INHALED CORTICOSTEROIDS SAFE FOR MY CHILD TO TAKE EVERY DAY?

Most children have asthma that can be controlled with low to moderate doses of inhaled steroids. Long-term studies have shown that these medications are safe to use, and possible effects on growth are very small (1-2cm of final adult height only).

### 7 WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN AIR QUALITY IS POOR?

Make sure asthma is well controlled heading into wildfire season.

When the air quality is poor, reduce outdoor activities or stay indoors with windows closed.

To plan your activities, visit:

(<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/bcairquality/data/aqitable.html>). Remember to review your action plan and know when to go and get help.



For more information visit:  
<http://bit.ly/pediatric-asthma-video>

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