



# ASTHMA CARE

## Taking Care of Asthma

### What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease of the airways in the lungs. No one knows why some people get asthma and some do not. There is no cure. But, asthma can be controlled.

As we breathe, air travels in and out of our lungs through airways. With asthma the airways become very inflamed and swollen. This causes the lungs to make extra fluid. The muscles around the airways also tighten. All this makes it hard to breath. This is called a flare-up or asthma attack.

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### What are the symptoms of asthma?

- **Shortness of breath.**  
You feel like you can't breathe fully.
- **Tightness in the chest.**  
You feel like a strap is around your chest.
- **Wheezing.**  
You hear a whistle sound when you breathe out.
- **Coughing.**  
The cough lasts more than a week and is constant, especially at night.



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## How do I take care of asthma?

- **Know your triggers** such as smoke, dust, grass, or exercise.
- **Work with your doctor**
  - ❑ Find and stay with a doctor for regular asthma care.
  - ❑ Request an asthma action plan. This plan tells you what to do during a flare up. It also tells you what to do in an emergency. Want an asthma action plan form to take to your doctor? Request one at 510-747-4577.
  - ❑ Take your medicines as prescribed. Make sure you understand how and when to take medicines. Ask questions! Your doctor wants you to understand your medicines.
  - ❑ Check with your doctor before using home remedies or over the counter medicines.

## What medicines do I take for asthma?

There are two kinds of asthma medicines. The doctor may give you one or both kinds. Do not mix them up. They do different things to the body.

- **Long-term controller** (Such as QVAR). This medicine helps keep the airways from being inflamed. It also lowers the chance of a flare-up. Use a controller even when you feel good. A controller helps to keep you feeling well.
- **Rescue medicine or quick reliever** (Such as Albuterol). Even when taking a controller, you may have a flare-up. Once a flare up starts, use a rescue medicine to stop it. Use rescue medicine before exercise or play to help prevent flare-ups.

## What about Peak Flow Readings?

A peak flow meter measures the airflow in the lungs. Your asthma plan will be based on your best air flow. Use the peak flow meter to catch a breathing problem before you begin to feel other symptoms.

## You don't have to do this alone!

To find out more about asthma care call Alliance Health Programs at **510-747-4577**.

Toll-Free: 1-877-932-2738;  
CRS/TTY: 711 or 1-800-735-2929;  
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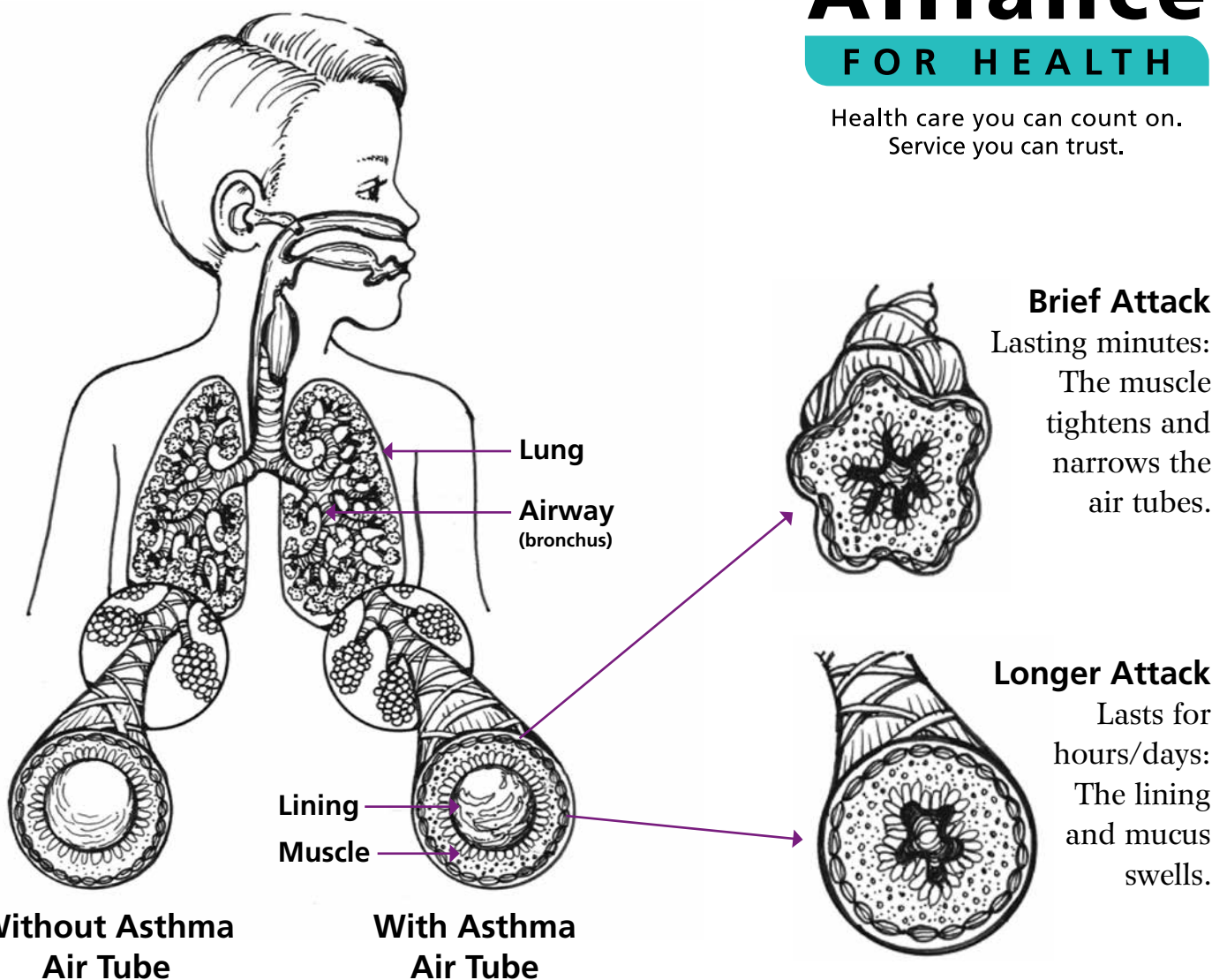
## What Happens during an Asthma Attack?

Asthma is a disease of the lungs. During an asthma attack the airways in the lungs become inflamed. Then, nearby cells release chemicals. This causes airways to react as follows:

- The lining of the airways becomes more inflamed and swollen.
- The mucous glands along the airways produce more mucus (like phlegm).
- The muscle around the airways tightens.

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## The Asthma Team

When your child has asthma, you need to partner with the doctor and the office staff. You are all on the same team! The things you observe about your child's asthma are as central to your child's care as is the doctor's skill and knowledge.



**Prepare by answering these questions.**

**They will help your child's doctor better understand and treat asthma:**

1. How many times has your child had symptoms in the last week during the day?  
During the night?
2. How many days of school/day care has your child missed due to asthma?
3. How many times did your child use the "quick relief/rescue" medicine?
4. How many times has your child been to the emergency room since the last visit?
5. How many times has your child been hospitalized for asthma since your last visit?
6. Have there been any changes in your child's school/day care/home?
7. What things seem to make your child's asthma worse?
8. If your child uses a peak flow meter, what was the reading the morning of the visit?

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**It may help your doctor and the office staff if you bring these items:**

- Asthma Action Plan**, if you have one.  
It may need updating.
- Asthma Medicines**
- Asthma devices** – bring peak flow meters, spacer and any other devices you use to care for your child’s asthma
- Home remedies or over the counter medicine** that you use to help your child with asthma

You should also bring your own questions about asthma. There are no dumb or silly questions about asthma. Asthma is a serious disease. You have a big job in taking care of a child with asthma. Your doctor wants to help you.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**

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## Asthma Triggers




Triggers are things that cause symptoms or bring on asthma attacks.

Triggers differ from person to person. What are your triggers?

Remember to stay away from your triggers. This will help control your asthma!

Common Triggers	How to avoid common triggers
<p><b>Irritants:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tobacco smoke</li> <li>• Cleaning products</li> <li>• Paints</li> <li>• Scented products</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Tobacco smoke:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not smoke – Get help to quit</li> <li>• Stay away from smokers.</li> <li>• Ask people not to smoke in your home or car</li> <li>• Let fresh air into your house</li> </ul> <p><b>Cleaning products/paints:</b></p> <p>Avoid being around strong smelling cleansers</p> <p><b>Scented products:</b></p> <p>Avoid using scented products such as perfume, deodorant, lotions, hairspray, and room deodorizers</p>

Common Triggers	How to avoid common triggers
<p><b>Exercise</b></p> 	<p><b>Exercise-induced asthma:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use asthma medication (albuterol)</li> <li>• Warm up before exercise</li> <li>• Breathe through your nose</li> </ul>
<p><b>Infections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colds</li> <li>• Flu</li> <li>• Sore throat</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a flu shot</li> <li>• Keep your body healthy with enough exercise and sleep</li> <li>• Stay away from people who have colds and flu</li> </ul>
<p><b>Allergens:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollen</li> <li>• Dust</li> <li>• Animals</li> <li>• Mold</li> <li>• Food</li> </ul>  	<p><b>Pollen:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay indoors during pollen season</li> <li>• Avoid using fans</li> </ul> <p><b>Mold:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let fresh air into your house</li> <li>• Fix leaky plumbing, roof or other sources of water</li> </ul> <p><b>Dust:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash bedding and stuffed toys in hot water</li> <li>• Cover mattresses and pillows in dust proof zippered covers</li> </ul> <p><b>Animals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider not having pets with fur or feathers</li> <li>• Keep pets out of your bedroom</li> <li>• Wash your hands after petting animals</li> </ul> <p><b>Food:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss food allergies with your doctor or nurse</li> </ul>

Common Triggers	How to avoid common triggers
<p><b>Pests:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cockroaches</li> <li>• Mice</li> <li>• Rats</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not leave food or garbage out.</li> <li>• Store food in airtight containers.</li> <li>• Clean all food crumbs or spilled liquids.</li> <li>• Vacuum up cockroach bodies.</li> <li>• Fill in holes in the walls or floors with copper wool.</li> <li>• Use baits or traps; don't use sprays and foggers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Factors:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather changes</li> <li>• Air pollution</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Weather changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dress for the weather.</li> <li>• When it is cold, breathe through your nose and cover it with a scarf.</li> </ul> <p><b>Air pollution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On bad pollution days, try to stay indoors and close the windows.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Fear</li> <li>• Laughter</li> <li>• Stress</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep calm by breathing slowly (belly breathing).</li> <li>• Relax your shoulders and neck muscles.</li> </ul>

## You don't have to do this alone!

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# Household Cleaning and Asthma



Keeping your home clean and dust-free is an important part of managing asthma. But many cleaning products can cause asthma or trigger asthma attacks, especially products with bleach, ammonia and vinegar. Here are some simple, low-cost ways to clean your house without causing problems for people with asthma.

<b>Cleaning hard surfaces (multi-purpose solution)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain water and a microfiber cloth will clean most surfaces and kill 99% of germs.</li> <li>• Use a mild unscented liquid dish or castile soap with water to cut grease and grime. Use a soap without anti-bacterial ingredients.</li> <li>• For scrubbing, add 1 tbsp. of baking soda to regular or soapy water.</li> <li>• Add lemon juice to regular or soapy water for a fresh smell and to cut grease.</li> </ul>
<b>Dusting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a dry microfiber cloth, <b>or</b> use a clean, slightly damp, soft cloth.</li> </ul>
<b>Windows, glass, and mirrors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoors, use plain water and a microfiber cloth.</li> <li>• Outdoors, add plain liquid soap to get rid of soot and grime.</li> </ul>
<b>Sinks, tubs, and tile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add 2 or 3 tbsp. of liquid soap to water and clean with a scrub brush.</li> <li>• Use baking soda or a scouring powder that does not contain bleach.</li> <li>• For small amounts of mold, mix liquid soap, baking soda, and 2 capfuls of hydrogen peroxide (3% solution). Let sit on surface. Wipe clean.</li> </ul>
<b>For odors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sprinkle baking soda in the bottom of trash cans.</li> <li>• Place a bowl or open box of baking soda in the refrigerator. Replace every 2 – 3 months.</li> <li>• Poke small holes in the top of a jar or plastic container. Fill the jar halfway with baking soda and close the container. Place near trash cans, litter boxes or other smelly places.</li> </ul>
<b>Ovens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrub with baking soda or a scouring powder that does not contain bleach.</li> <li>• Make a paste with 1/4 cup baking soda, 2 tbsp. salt, and a little hot water. Apply to surface. Let sit 5 minutes. Scrub well. Remove with water and microfiber cloth.</li> </ul>
<b>Toilet bowls</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pour a small amount of liquid soap or 1/4 cup baking soda into toilet bowl, then brush.</li> <li>• Wipe toilet seat and rim with hydrogen peroxide (3% solution). Hydrogen peroxide acts like a disinfectant.</li> </ul>
<b>Carpets, rugs, and floors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vacuum carpets, rugs, and floors at least once a week to reduce dust and dust mites.</li> <li>• Vacuum slowly.</li> <li>• Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter, which picks up smaller dust particles.</li> </ul>



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## Why is Smoking Harmful?

### Did you know that?

- **All smoke can trigger an asthma attack.** People with asthma have sensitive airways. Smoke irritates the airways. This irritation can bring on an asthma attack.
- **Second-hand smoke can trigger an asthma attack.** It can also make an attack worse. The smell of smoke on clothing and furniture can irritate the lungs of people with asthma.
- **Smoke in the house can cause more asthma attacks in children.**
- **Tobacco smoke contains harmful chemicals.** People who live around cigarette smoke breathe the same chemicals in smoke that smokers do. These include:
  - Deadly poisons
  - Dead tissue preservative
  - Nail polish remover
  - Wood alcohol
  - Torch fuel
  - House cleaner
- **Family members who live with smokers** may breathe as much second-hand smoke in one day as they would if they smoked 1-2 cigarettes themselves.
- **Over 3,000 non-smokers die each year** from lung cancer caused by second-hand smoke.
- **Second-hand smoke is very bad for babies and children** because they have small lungs and airways.
- **Smoking takes 8 years off the life** of the smoker and causes many types of health problems.



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## Quit Smoking

This is the most important thing that you can do for yourself and your family.

- Talk to your doctor or his/her staff about quitting
- Use medications for quitting, such as the nicotine patch
- Get group, in-person or phone counseling

## Tips to Quit

- Think about past quit attempts. What worked and what did not?
- Ask friends, family and friends at work to support you
- Plan to do something you enjoy every day
  - This will keep your mind off smoking
  - Reward yourself
- Avoid people and places that will tempt you to smoke

## If you cannot quit now there are ways to keep smoke away from people with asthma:

- Smoke outside your home
- Do not allow anyone else to smoke in your home – direct them outside
- Wear a smoking jacket and leave it outside. The smoking jacket will shield your clothes from the smoke.

## To avoid secondhand smoke:

- Ask family and friends to smoke outside
- Don't let people smoke in your car
- If your family members are smokers, ask them to think about quitting

## California Smokers Helpline

Looking for help to stop smoking? The Smokers' Helpline can help you quit. This service is free! Call them at **1-800-662-8887**.

**Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.**

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## Inhaled Steroids

Inhaled steroids are medicines for asthma. They help make the airways less sensitive to asthma triggers. They take away the swelling and mucus from the inside of the airways.

Common names for inhaled steroids are:

- QVAR
- Flovent
- Pulmicort
- Dulera
- Symbicort



### Side Effects

Many people worry about the side-effects of inhaled steroids. They are, on the whole, safe when used as prescribed. Taking inhaled steroids has fewer risks than not being in control.

One side effect is getting a yeast infection in the mouth. You can prevent this by:

- **Using a spacer with the inhaler**
- **Always rinse out your mouth (rinse and spit) after using the inhaler.**

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## Questions about inhaled steroids

- **Is this the same steroid athletes use?**

No. The type of steroid that athletes may use to “bulk up” is not the same as the type used for asthma. In fact, inhaled steroids allow athletes with asthma to breathe easier in order to perform a sport.

- **Will inhaled steroids affect my child’s growth?**

Current research tells us that the good that comes from controlled asthma far outweighs the risks of inhaled steroids. Asthma that is not controlled can slow a child’s growth.

- **Can my child become addicted to inhaled steroids?**

No. Inhaled steroids do not cause addiction. They must be used as prescribed in order to get the full benefit.



## What about Peak Flow Readings?

A peak flow meter measures the airflow in the lungs. Your asthma plan will be based on your best air flow. Use the peak flow meter to catch a breathing problem before you begin to feel other symptoms.

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## How to Use Your Diskus

A diskus holds asthma medicine. The diskus is the most common type of dry powder inhaler. Advair is the name of a medicine that comes in a diskus.



### 1. OPEN

- Push away on the thumbgrip until the mouthpiece is fully exposed.



### 2. CLICK

- Slide the lever away from you until it clicks.
- Make sure you don't close or tip your diskus.



### 3. INHALE

- Breathe out to empty your lungs.
- Put the mouthpiece in your mouth.
- Breathe in quickly and deeply, then hold your breath while you slowly count to 10.
- Rinse your mouth with water and spit it out.

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## Asthma Diary: A Tool for Tracking Symptoms and Triggers

**How to use:** Fill in one row each day to track asthma. Triggers are the things, like dust or running, which set off asthma symptoms or asthma attacks. Use these numbers to rate each symptom:

**0 = None    1 = Mild    2 = Moderate    3 = Severe    4 = Emergency**

Date	Peak Flow-AM	Peak Flow-PM	Triggers	Rate Symptoms	Medicine Taken	Response to Medicine
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Cough <input type="checkbox"/> Wheeze <input type="checkbox"/> Short of breath <input type="checkbox"/> Tightness <input type="checkbox"/> Other:		

**Print this page** or make copies that you can write on. Or, you can use this as a guide of what information you should write down in your own asthma notebook. **Take the diary** to your doctor visits. This way he or she can better know how asthma affects your or your child's asthma.



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Live Healthy, 10-A, 1/2013