



ASTHMA CARE

Taking Care of your Child's Asthma

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease of the airways in the lungs. No one knows why some children 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.

What are the symptoms of asthma?

- **Shortness of breath.** Your child feels like he/she can't breathe fully.
- **Tightness in the chest.** Your child feels like a strap is around his/her chest.
- **Wheezing.** You hear a whistle sound when your child breathes out.
- **Coughing.** The cough lasts more than a week and is constant, especially at night.



Request an asthma action plan form to take to your doctor at 510-747-4577.

ALAMEDA
Alliance
FOR HEALTH

Health care you can count on.
Service you can trust.

How do I take care of my child's asthma?

- **Know your child's triggers such as smoke, dust, grass, or exercise.**
- **Work with your child's doctor**
 - ✓ Find and stay with a doctor for regular asthma care.
 - ✓ Request an asthma action plan. This plan tells you what to do when your child's asthma flares 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**.
 - ✓ Have your child take his/her medicines as prescribed. Make sure you understand how and when to give medicines. Ask questions!
 - ✓ Check with your child's doctor before using home remedies or over the counter medicines.



What medicines does my child take for asthma?

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

- **Long-term controller** (Such as QVAR, Flovent or Pulmicort). This medicine helps keep the airways from being inflamed. It also lowers the chance of a flare-up. Use a controller even when your child feels good. It helps keep your child feeling well.
- **Rescue medicine or quick reliever** (Such as Albuterol). Even when taking a controller, your child 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?

Children older than 5 years can usually use a **peak flow meter**. A peak flow meter measures the airflow in the lungs. Your child's asthma plan is based on her/his best air flow. Use the peak flow meter to catch a breathing problem before your child shows other symptoms.

What do I do about asthma at school or daycare?

- Schools/daycare centers should keep an asthma plan for your child.
- You, your child, the teacher, and the school nurse or principal/director should discuss and understand the asthma action plan.
- Give these to the school or daycare:
 1. A copy of your child's **asthma action plan**. Some schools have a form they want you to use. Take the form to your child's doctor to fill out. Return it to the school.
 2. A list of your child's **early warning signs** of an asthma flare-up.
 3. A list of your child's **triggers**. Add other things your child should avoid. (If exercise is a trigger, put the coach or gym teacher on the school action plan.)
 4. A list of **medicines**:
 - ✓ Include when they should be given to your child.
 - ✓ Include any side effects.
 - ✓ Your child may need medicines at school. Older children can carry an emergency inhaler to school. Your child may carry them with him/her. And, the school should store asthma medicines in a place that is easy to get to.

Keep your child at home if he/she has these signs:

- Infection, sore throat, swollen or painful neck.
- Fever over 100 degrees.
- Wheezing or coughing that lasts after taking medicine.
- Hard time breathing or very fast breathing.

Learn More!

A great way to help your child is to learn more about asthma. Talk to your child's doctor or nurse. Ask your pharmacist to explain how to take the asthma medicines. Asthma flyers, action plan forms and in home support are free.

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;
8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday.

www.alamedaalliance.org

Permission is granted to use and duplicate these materials for non-profit educational use as long as no changes are made without permission from Alameda Alliance for Health.

ALAMEDA
Alliance
FOR HEALTH

Health care you can count on.
Service you can trust.