



Asthma

Parent - Family Newsletter

September 2011



Understanding and Managing Your Child's Asthma



ver the last 20 years, the prevalence of childhood asthma has nearly doubled.

While some of this

can be attributed to an increase in awareness (and thus diagnoses), Dr. Norman Edelman, chief medical officer for the American Lung Association, says the rest is a mystery: "We don't really know why," he says. "The most common hypothesis is the 'hygiene' hypothesis, which says that infants

need to be exposed to certain bacterial and other antigens early in infancy to develop a more mature and less asthma-prone immune system."

Today, this chronic lung disorder affects an estimated 7 million youngsters. It's the third leading cause of hospitalizations among children under the age of 15, and it's responsible for 14 million lost school days every year, according to the American Lung Association. What's more, asthma can cause discomfort, it can prevent kids from playing with others, and if it disturbs sleep it may lead to poorer performance in school, Dr. Edelman says.

There's no cure for asthma, but it can be managed and treated, and children with asthma can lead healthy lives. In fact, Dr. Edelman says, symptoms may even disappear after the adolescent growth spurt. But

until they do, it's important to know how to control this life-threatening disorder. Brush up on your family's asthma management skills with the articles in this month's newsletter.

Symptoms of Asthma

Millions of children have been diagnosed with asthma, but millions more are probably suffering from the disorder and don't even know it. If your child has any of the following symptoms, make an appointment with the pediatrician to get an actual diagnosis:

- * Shortness of breath
- * Wheezing
- * Continual coughing
- * Difficulty exercising
- * Unexplained anxiety (particularly in young kids)
- * Regularly waking from sleep because of a cough



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(see step 2) can also help minimize your child's exposure to pet allergens.

5 Steps to Creating an Asthma Friendly Home

Making your home asthma friendly means removing the common triggers that can bring on an asthma episode. Follow these five steps for an asthma friendly home:

1. Quit smoking: It's no surprise that smoke is a major asthma trigger. If you smoke, you should stop or at least avoid smoking inside the home, car or around the family member who has asthma.

2. Clean regularly: Dust mites, cockroaches and other pests can trigger asthma. The American Lung Association recommends you wash bedding regularly, fix leaks, store garbage outside, vacuum and dust weekly, as well as use allergen-proof pillow and mattress covers to help control your child's asthma.

3. Avoid having pets: Animal dander and saliva can be big asthma triggers. If you don't already have pets, you should avoid getting one if your child's asthma is out

of control. If Fluffy is already a part of your family, there are things you can do to minimize asthma triggers, such as avoiding giving the animal kisses and keeping the pets out of rooms where your family (especially your child with asthma) spends a lot of time. Cleaning regularly



Developing an Asthma Action Plan

Students spend almost half of their day at school, so if an asthma episode were to happen, chances are good it would happen at school. One of the best ways to help keep your child's asthma under control is to develop an asthma action plan and share it with your child's teacher at the beginning of the school year. This simple document should outline the following information:

- >> Your child's asthma symptoms and what triggers an episode
- >> Medications
- >> Any medicine required before exercise
- >> Instructions about what to do if an asthma episode does not improve with prescribed medication.

Source: American Lung Association