

## Preventive Measures

- Limit exposure to outside air during days of poor air quality.
- Avoid smoking at home or in the car. Call the California Smokers Hotline at 1-800-NO-BUTTS to stop smoking.
- Cigarette smoke odors can linger on clothing and should be changed when around asthmatic children.
- Avoid lighting the fireplace in the presence of anyone who has asthma.
- Avoid burning candles or incense.
- Allow for adequate ventilation when using household cleaning agents and have anyone with asthma leave the room.
- Dust and vacuum frequently to prevent excessive dust build-up in the home.
- Clean out the refrigerator regularly.
- Clean out garbage pails each time they are emptied.
- It is best to keep all household pets outdoors. If not possible, they should not be in the bedroom with someone with asthma.



## Things that make breathing difficult for those with asthma:

### Household Environment:

- Wood-burning fireplace
- Perfumes
- Tobacco smoke
- Hairsprays
- Cleaning agents
- Dust mites
- Stuffed animals
- Mold
- Animal dander



### Health Issues

- Common cold or respiratory infections are common precipitating factors of an acute asthma attack.

### Stress/Cold

- Cold weather

### Pollen

### Exercise



## Contact us

For more information on how you can be involved with the Kings County Asthma Coalition or to learn more about asthma, current treatment options and asthma management, contact us at the Kings County Department of Public Health.

**559-584-1411 • Fax: 559-584-6040**  
**[www.kingsasthma.com](http://www.kingsasthma.com)**



# ASTHMA 101

## FOR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

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# ASTHMA 101: For Parents and Caregivers

## What is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition that affects a person's airways, which are also called breathing tubes or bronchial tubes. These tubes lead from the windpipe, or trachea, into the lungs. For most children, breathing is simple: They breathe in through their noses or mouths, and the air goes into the windpipe. From there, it travels through the airways and into the lungs. But for kids with asthma, breathing can be a lot more difficult because their airways are very sensitive.

An asthma flare-up, which some people call an asthma attack, happens when a person's airways get narrower and it becomes a lot harder for air to get into and out of the lungs. Sometimes the swollen airways produce extra mucus, which makes things pretty sticky, so it's easy to see why it's hard to breathe.

Between flare-ups, a child's breathing can be totally normal or seem that way. But during a flare-up, it can feel like the person is breathing through a straw. A child with asthma may wheeze (a whistling sound when he or she breathes), cough and feel tightness in the chest. An asthma flare-up can get worse and worse if a child doesn't use asthma medicine.

After an asthma flare-up, the airways almost always return to the way they were before, although it can take several days.

## Asthma Management

Children whose asthma is under control are less likely to experience severe attacks and more likely to be able to enjoy moderate or normal physical activities such as exercising, running or playing sports. The two most important things for a parent or caregiver to know are (1) how to manage the child's asthma in the home and (2) what to do in the event of a flare-up (attack):

- Be aware of the child's warning signs so you can start treatment immediately.
- Reduce exposure to whatever may be causing the asthma episodes. If you can, remove the allergen or trigger from the child's home environment.
- Give your child's medications as prescribed by his or her physician. Pay close attention to the frequency and dosage and DO NOT skip any medication.
- Make sure that all of your child's caregivers are familiar with his condition and treatment.
- Teach your child to relax and ensure them that their treatment will make them feel better soon.
- If your child is old enough to use a peak flow meter, check the flow rate 5 to 10 minutes after each treatment to see if air flow is improving.
- Carefully observe your child's condition and seek help if needed.
- Follow up with your child's primary care provider or respiratory specialist.

## Knowing When to Seek Emergency Care

If your child's condition is not improving, you MUST seek emergency care. Here are some ways to determine if emergency treatment is needed:

- Wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath get worse even after medication has had ample time to work.
- The child shows signs that breathing is difficult and painful. He struggles to catch a breath, is hunched over or sucks in chest and tightens neck muscles with each attempted breath.
- Peak flow rate declines or stays the same after using bronchodilators.
- The child has trouble doing an activity, standing, walking or even talking.
- Lips or fingernails turn gray or blue.

**Don't be afraid to seek medical treatment even when the above signs are not so obvious. Your child's life may depend on it!**



**For more asthma information, visit [www.kingsasthma.com](http://www.kingsasthma.com).**