

Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#57 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

KICK ASTHMA

Take charge and control it



Have a regular doctor
and an 'Asthma Action Plan.'

Take controller medicine
every day for persistent asthma.

Stay away from asthma triggers,
especially cigarette smoke.



• Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit nyc.gov/health
• Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite nyc.gov/health
• 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址: nyc.gov/health





What is asthma?

- Asthma is a lung disease that makes it hard to breathe.
- Asthma symptoms include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness.
- People can develop asthma at any age, but it usually starts in childhood.

You can control it.

- Asthma is a long-term (chronic) condition. People have it for many years.
- There is no cure – but you can take charge and learn to control it!

Have a regular doctor

If you have asthma, see your doctor regularly, even if you're feeling well.

- Let the doctor know if asthma interferes with sleep, work, school, play or exercise.
- Tell your doctor how often you have symptoms, such as coughing or wheezing, and how often you use your quick-relief inhaler.



Use the right medicines

Spacers are important.

Many asthma medicines are inhaled. If you use a metered dose inhaler or pump, be sure to use a spacer.

Use controller medicines to prevent attacks.

- People with persistent asthma should use controller medicines.
- You have persistent asthma if you have:
 - Daytime symptoms more than twice a week, or
 - Nighttime symptoms more than twice a month.
- Controllers must be taken every day, even when you feel well.
- The most effective controllers are called “inhaled corticosteroids.” They are prescribed in small doses and are safe to use.
- Inhaled corticosteroids are NOT the same as anabolic steroids that some people use unsafely to build muscles.

Use quick-relief medicines to relieve symptoms.

- Carry quick-relief medicine all the time in case of an emergency.
- Unlike controllers, quick-relief medicines don’t prevent attacks.

Allergy control.

Your doctor may also recommend medicine for hay fever and other allergies that can trigger asthma.



Lead a healthy, active life!

With asthma under control, you can:

- Participate fully in sports and other physical activities.
- Not miss school or work because of asthma.
- Sleep through the night.
- Not have severe asthma symptoms.
- Not need to go to the emergency room or be hospitalized because of asthma.



Watch out for triggers



Tobacco smoke is a serious asthma trigger.

- Different people have different triggers. Learning what triggers *your* asthma is important for control.
- Colds and upper respiratory infections are major triggers for children.
- Other triggers can include furry pets (especially cats), cockroaches, mice, dust mites, cold weather, strong fumes, mold and mildew, and pollen.



Take charge!

- If you have persistent asthma, take controller medicine *every day* to prevent asthma attacks.
- Establish a smoke-free home. If you smoke, call 311 for free help to quit.
- Get a flu shot every year.
- Reduce clutter, and get rid of roaches and mice safely (without using sprays or strong pesticides).
- Vacuum rugs, curtains and furniture, and wash bedding in hot water.
- When pollen or air pollution rises, close your windows. Use an air conditioner if possible.

Asthma Action Plan

- Ask your doctor for a written plan to help you manage your asthma at home or at school.
- An Asthma Action Plan is easy to follow, even for children. It tells you when and how to take your asthma medicine.
- Call 311 to get one for your doctor to fill out.

Asthma Medicine at School

- A Medication Administration Form allows your child to receive medicine at school when necessary.
- Every school-aged child with asthma should have a Medication Administration Form.
- Call 311 to get one for your doctor to fill out.

More Information and Help

- NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene: www.nyc.gov/health/asthma or call 311 and ask for Asthma
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/asthma
- American Lung Association of the City of New York: www.alany.org
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org/healthtopics/asthma.cfm
- American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology: www.aaaai.org/patients/gallery
- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America: www.aafa.org
- World Trade Center Health: nyc.gov/911healthinfo

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311**

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