

Lifestyles



for children and teens with **Asthma**

A newsletter for Blue Care Network, BCN Service Company and Blue Cross Complete members



INSIDE:
Your asthma
action plan

Could stress bring on your asthma attacks?

Many things can bring on your asthma attacks. They include exercise, allergies, cold air, rain and more. Now doctors believe that stress also may trigger them. The kinds of things that cause stress — which can affect your asthma — range from the death of someone close, to school-related problems, such as bullying.

Here are a few tips that can help you control the stress that may be affecting your asthma:

- Make sure you get plenty of sleep and eat well. You need 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. Also, a healthy diet includes at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get involved! Spending time with friends, starting a hobby or joining an after-school club can help ease stress.
- Stay active every day. Exercise helps reduce stress. However, it also can sometimes trigger asthma attacks. Get your doctor's OK first.
- Talk to your parents or another close adult about any problems you're experiencing.

Effectively coping with stress is important to feeling better. Talk to your doctor about ways to safely manage your stress.

Health checks

Every year, ask your child's doctor about these wellness checks. Your child may need them more than once a year.

- ✓ **Update your child's action plan**
- ✓ **Review your child's quick-relief and long-term control medicines**
- ✓ **Have your child take a pulmonary function test**

Be sure your child has regular well-visits. During these visits, your child's doctor will make sure your child's vaccines are up to date, including flu shots. Also, check with your doctor to see if your child's pneumonia shot is up to date.

If you've thought about quitting smoking, Quit the Nic, our free program, offers:

- One-on-one counseling with a registered nurse
- An action plan
- Educational materials

To enroll or for more details, call 1-800-811-1764. Nurses are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. TTY users should call 1-800-240-3050.

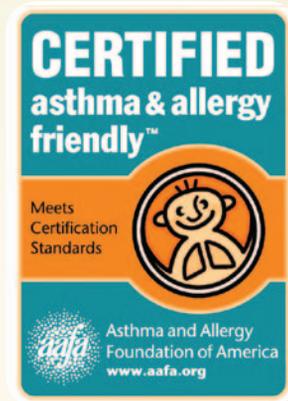
How to shop for asthma-friendly toys

If you have asthma, think twice before cuddling up with your favorite teddy bear. Stuffed animals and other toys with fabric and fillings actually may aggravate this condition. The reason: soft toys collect dust mites and these tiny creatures are common asthma and allergy triggers.

Fortunately, selecting a plush pal for those with asthma just got easier, thanks to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. The organization has a program to certify toys that are "asthma-friendly."

Toys that carry the AAFA certification label come with instructions to help keep them in asthma-friendly condition. For example, to keep the plush toy allergy-free, it must be kept in a freezer for 24 hours. Then it needs to be machine-washed every four weeks. The toys are manufactured to strict standards and pretested to ensure they withstand the recommended treatments.

Asthma-friendly toys are available at major retailers. The toys have a logo picturing a smiling boy with clear lungs. This lets you know a better choice of a teddy for your child with asthma or allergies.





My child's asthma action plan

The colors of the traffic light will help your child use asthma medicines. Take this form to your child's doctor to fill out. Then make two copies. Keep the original. Give one copy to your child's doctor and one to your child's school.

Name _____ Date of birth _____ Effective date _____ to _____
Doctor _____ Phone _____ Parent or guardian _____ Phone _____
Emergency contact _____ Phone _____
Child is able to self-medicate Yes or No Doctor's signature _____

GREEN ZONE means GO.

You have **ALL** of these:

- Breathing is good
- No cough or wheeze
- Sleep through the night
- Can work or play
- Peak flow above:

Use these medicines every day.

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

For asthma with exercise, take:

YELLOW ZONE means CAUTION.

You have **ANY** of these symptoms:

- First sign of a cold
- Exposure to known trigger
- Cough
- Mild wheeze
- Tight chest
- Coughing at night
- Peak flow from: to

Continue with GREEN ZONE medicine and ADD:

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it
First > _____	_____	_____
Next > _____	_____	_____

If a quick-relief or **YELLOW ZONE** medicine is needed more than two to three times a week, **call your doctor.**

RED ZONE means DANGER!

Your asthma is getting worse fast:

- Medicine is not helping within 15 to 20 minutes
- Breathing is hard and fast
- Nose opens wide
- Ribs show
- Lips and/or fingernails are blue
- Trouble walking and talking
- Peak flow below:

Take these medicines and call your doctor:

Medicine	How much to take	When to take it
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Get help from a doctor now. Your doctor will want to see your child right away. It is important. If you cannot contact your child's doctor, go directly to the emergency room. **DO NOT WAIT.** Make an appointment with your child's primary care physician within two days of an ER visit or hospitalization.

My child's asthma action plan *continued*



Asthma trigger checklist

Check all items that trigger your child's asthma and could make his or her symptoms worse. Talk with your child's doctor about how to best manage these triggers.

- Chalk
- Cigarette smoke and secondhand smoke
- Colds or flu
- Dust mites
- Exercise
- Mold
- Pests — cockroaches
- Pets — animal dander
- Pollen
- Poor air quality
- Strong odors, perfumes
- Sudden temperature change
- Wood smoke
- Foods: _____
- Other: _____

Recognizing asthma triggers

It's important to know what can trigger your child's asthma. This can help you control the environment to minimize or eliminate those things. Here are some common asthma triggers:



Allergens: Common allergens are pollens, molds and animal dander.



Irritants: Inflamed airways are very sensitive to environmental irritants, including:

- Air pollutants, such as tobacco smoke, wood smoke and chemicals in the air
- Strong smells or sprays, such as perfumes, household cleaners or cooking fumes
- Changing weather conditions, such as changes in temperature and humidity



Infections: Colds, the flu and pneumonia can trigger or aggravate asthma.



Exercise: Physical activity can trigger attacks in certain circumstances. Swimming is good because warm, moist air helps prevent attacks.



Medicines: Certain medicines, including aspirin and ibuprofen, can cause asthma attacks in some children.



Food: Some foods or food additives can trigger asthma symptoms. Foods to be careful with include dried fruit, processed potatoes, peanuts and shrimp.

If you don't know your child's triggers, try to limit exposure to one possible trigger at a time. Watch to see if your child gets better. This may show you if the trigger is a problem.

Three steps to help control your asthma

Learning about asthma is an important step in keeping it under control and limiting the impact it has on your life and your activities with your friends. Since asthma is a chronic illness, management is an ongoing process. Here are three steps that can help you control your asthma:

1. Know what triggers it

- Respiratory infections — colds and sinus infections
- Allergens — pollen, mold, dust, dust mites and dander from animals with fur or feathers
- Irritants — perfumes, cleaning fluids, tobacco smoke and air pollution
- Exercise — a result of breathing fast
- Strong emotions — stress, fear and anger

Your doctor can also help you identify and learn more about asthma triggers. Then you can work as a team to make a plan to reduce your exposure.

2. Take medicine

Controlling asthma requires two kinds of prescription medicines:

- Quick-relief or rescue medications that provide fast-acting relief of symptoms
- Long-term control medications that are taken on a daily basis to control and treat symptoms

3. Make a plan

Making sure you have an Asthma Action Plan is important. Work with your doctor to create one. Ask your parents to make sure that your teacher and school nurse have a copy too.

The plan will help you and others know what steps to take to manage asthma on a daily basis. It also gives guidelines for when to call your doctor and when to go to the emergency room.

Making sure you stick to a plan can help you live a full, active life, even with asthma. To help get you started, we've included an Asthma Action Plan in this issue. Fill it out with your doctor.





Blue Care Network
of Michigan

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Southfield, MI 48086-5043

If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call:

1-800-392-4247

1-800-257-9980 (TTY)

8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mon – Fri



BCN Service Company

Blue Cross  
complete
of Michigan

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> Healthy Living & Good Eating

Juicy Ladybug Treats

- 1 medium-size ripe apple
- ¼ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon reduced fat, creamy peanut butter

Wash your apple. Have an adult cut your apple in half and remove the core.

Place the apple on a plate with the skin facing up. Dip the chocolate chips into peanut butter.

Place the chocolate chips on the apple wherever you like to make your ladybug's spots.



Nutritional information per serving: 250 calories; 12 g fat; 36 g carbohydrates; 3 g protein; 0 mg cholesterol; 26 g sugar; 65 mg sodium; 4 g fiber.