

# ASTHMA

## EARLY SIGNS OF AN ASTHMA EPISODE

A Student may exhibit one or more of these signs during the initial phase of an asthma episode

### 1. Changes in Breathing

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Mouth Breathing
- Shortness of Breath
- Rapid Breathing

### 2. Verbal Complaints

- Chest Tightness
- Chest Discomfort (hurts)
- Cannot Catch Breath
- Dry Mouth
- Neck 'feels' Funny
- Doesn't feel well

### 3. Other Signs and Symptoms

- Itchy Neck/Chin
- Clipped Speech, Short Choppy Sentences

## Asthma in Children - Overview

### What is asthma?

Asthma makes it hard for your child to breathe. It causes swelling and inflammation in the airways that lead to the lungs. When asthma flares up, the airways tighten and become narrower. This keeps the air from passing through easily and makes it hard for your child to breathe. These flare ups are also called asthma attacks or exacerbations.

Asthma affects children in different ways. Some children only have asthma attacks during allergy season, when they breathe in cold air, or when they exercise. Others have many bad attacks that send them to the doctor often.

Even if your child has few asthma attacks, you still need to treat the asthma. If the swelling and irritation in your child's airways isn't controlled, asthma could lower your child's quality of life, prevent your child from exercising, and increase your child's risk of going to the hospital.

Even though asthma is a lifelong disease, treatment can control it and keep your child healthy. Many children with asthma play sports and live healthy, active lives.

### What causes asthma?

Experts do not know exactly what causes asthma. But there are some things we do know:

- Asthma runs in families.
- Asthma is much more common in people with allergies, though not everyone with allergies gets asthma. And not everyone with asthma has allergies.
- Pollution may cause asthma or make it worse.

## **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms of asthma can be mild or severe. When your child has asthma, he or she may:

- Wheeze, making a loud or soft whistling noise that occurs when the airways narrow.
- Cough a lot.
- Feel tightness in the chest.
- Feel short of breath.
- Have trouble sleeping because of coughing and wheezing.
- Quickly get tired during exercise.

## **What Causes An Asthma Attack?**

### **Asthma Triggers**

- Triggers are the things that make your asthma worse and can cause an asthma episode (attack)
- Staying away from triggers is an important step to controlling asthma
- Each person has different triggers

## **COMMON ASTHMA TRIGGERS**

### **Indoor:**

- Dust and dust mites
- Food allergies
- Furry and feathered animals like cats, dogs, and birds
- Illness – colds and flu
- Mold and mildew
- Pests like cockroaches and mice
- Strong odors like perfume, sprays and cleaning products
- Tobacco smoke

### **Outdoor:**

- Exercise
- Pollen from the trees, grass, plants and flowers
- Weather and air pollution

### **Other:**

- Strong emotional states

### **WebMD Medical Reference**

Sources:

American Lung Association: "An Asthma Attack." National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: "What are the Signs and Symptoms of Asthma?"