

All About Asthma

# We Can Control Asthma Now!

We can do it working together!



**L.A. Care**  
HEALTH PLAN®

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## What is asthma?

- A condition of the lungs that makes breathing difficult.
- A physical condition, not an emotional illness.
- A condition that runs in families and is not contagious.
- Almost 5 million kids in the United States have asthma.
- Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled.

See your doctor even when you are feeling well. Working together, you can control your asthma!

## What happens with asthma?

Three changes happen inside the airways of the lungs:

1. The lining of the airways becomes swollen (called inflammation), making the airways smaller and harder for air to go through.
2. The muscles around the airways tighten (called constriction), making them smaller.
3. The airways make a thick mucus, trapping the air.

***These three things make it hard to breathe!***

## Triggers

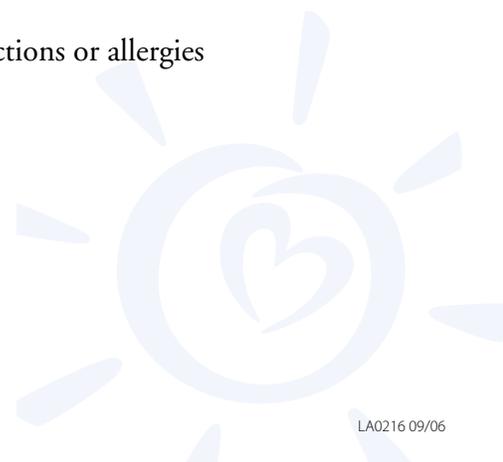
Triggers are things that may bother the airways, making it hard to breathe or causing asthma signs. When asthma is triggered, and you don't act right away, your child may have an asthma attack. Work with your child's doctors to learn how to stay away from triggers whenever he or she can.

Here are some common triggers:

- Smoke
- Allergies to:
  - Pets
  - Mold
  - Dust, dust mites
  - Pollen—grass, trees, plants and weeds
  - Pests—cockroaches and mice
  - Certain foods
- Colds and flu
- Untreated sinus infections or allergies
- Exercise
- Changes in weather
- Strong emotions
- Strong smells
- Pollution



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## Asthma signs

Here are some common signs that an asthma attack is starting or getting worse:

- Coughing—day, night, or with exercise
- Trouble breathing
- Wheezing (whistling noise)
- Tightness in chest
- Trouble sleeping/waking at night
- Drop in peak flow reading

## What happens when asthma is controlled

- Normal activity (including exercise)
- Few or no asthma symptoms

## Signs of an asthma emergency

- A lot of difficulty breathing, walking and talking due to shortness of breath
- Asthma signs staying the same or getting worse
- Lips and/or nails turning blue

## What to do in an asthma emergency

- Give quick-relief medicine (albuterol) right away and follow the child's action plan.
- Do not leave the child alone!
- **Call 911** or go to the nearest emergency room if asthma signs do not improve right away after quick-relief medicine.

**If you do not have an Asthma Action Plan—ask your doctor or nurse!**



## Asthma medicines and what they do

### 1. Quick relief (bronchodilators)

- Opens the airways fast to stop an asthma attack once there are asthma warning signs.
- Sometimes your doctor will have you take it before exercise or if you know you will be around one of your asthma triggers.
- Some brand names of these “quick relief” medicines are: Albuterol, Proventil, Ventolin and Xopenex.

If you need to use this more than 2 times a week let your doctor or nurse know.

### 2. Controller medicines (anti-inflammatory)

- Help cut down on swelling and mucus
- Must be taken every day, even when you feel good and have no asthma signs!
- Don't give up! The medicine may take up to 2 weeks to work.
- Some brand name controller medicines are: Flovent, Azmacort, Pulmicort, Vancril, Advair, Singulair and Intal.

*We Can Control Asthma Now!*

**1-888-4LA-CARE (1-888-452-2273)**

For members with hearing or speech loss,  
call 1-866-LACARE1 (1-866-522-2731)

