

July/August 2012

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

UNDERSTANDING ASTHMA

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs. It is one of the most common long-term diseases of children, but adults have asthma, too. In the United States, more than 22 million people are known to have asthma. Nearly 6 million of these people are children.

An asthma attack happens in the body's airways, which are the paths that carry air to the lungs. As the air moves through the lungs, the airways become smaller, like the branches of a tree are smaller than the tree trunk. During an asthma attack, the sides of the airways in the lungs swell and the airways shrink. Less air gets in and out of the lungs, and mucus that the body produces clogs up the airways even more.

Asthma causes repeated episodes of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing.



Try to limit your child's contact with these triggers, especially in places where your child spends a lot of time, such as at home and school.

Children with asthma have unusually sensitive airways. Asthma symptoms can be triggered by many things in the environment. These triggers are unique to each child. Common triggers of asthma symptoms are cigarette smoke, exercise, cold viruses, strong emotions, pollens, house dust, molds, animal dander, perfume, strong odors, and cold air. Climate and weather changes can also affect asthma.

Your child should use the asthma medicine your health care provider prescribed. Your child may need more

than one type of medicine: one to prevent attacks (controller medicine) and another to help stop an attack once it has started (quick-relief medicine). Ask your health care provider when to use each kind and make sure you and your child know how to use all prescribed medicines correctly.

The use of a **valved holding chamber**, or spacer, helps your child get all the medicine to his or her lungs. Use a mask if your child has trouble with the mouthpiece.

Follow the links below to find out more information about ASTHMA

 [American Lung Association](#)

 [Children's Mercy Hospital Asthma and Allergy Clinic](#)

 [CDC Asthma information and resources](#)

 [Allergy and Asthma Foundation](#)

 [Asthma books and activities from Nickjr.](#)