

# Riley Speaks

## Asthma and Your Child



Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects 22.2 million people in the United States, including 5.6 million children. It's not curable, but the good news is that it is easily controlled and manageable. A variety of factors can cause asthma. Your child may have inherited the tendency, had respiratory infections that led to the disease, or came into contact with certain allergens or viruses as an infant.

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

When the disease is well controlled, there are no symptoms. However, your child still has asthma. Asthma attacks can occur without warning. They are less likely to occur if your child takes his or her asthma preventive medicine every day.

During an asthma attack, bronchial tubes become narrow and airflow in and out of the lung is blocked. Symptoms include:

- coughing
- wheezing
- chest tightness
- shortness of breath

### HOW IS ASTHMA DIAGNOSED?

Asthma is typically diagnosed by completing a medical history, a physical exam and a lung function test. The test may be difficult for those under age 5. Thus, your doctor may rely on other factors. He or she also may use a trial of asthma medicines to see how your child responds.

### HOW IS ASTHMA TREATED?

Asthma is often treated with two types of medicines: long-term control and quick-relief. Long-term control medicines are taken daily and help reduce airway inflammation as well as prevent asthma symptoms. Quick-relief, or "rescue" medicines, relieve asthma symptoms that may flare up.

If the medicines don't relieve an asthma attack or your child's peak flow meter is less than half of his or her personal best number, you should call your doctor for advice.

If your child has trouble walking or talking because he or she is out of breath or has blue lips or fingernails, you should head to the nearest emergency room.

### AS A PARENT, WHAT CAN I DO?

You and your child's physician will create an asthma action plan. In addition to medications, this will mean avoiding triggers that cause your child's asthma to flare up, such as pollen, mold, tobacco smoke and animal dander.

**The Department of Pediatrics at Riley Hospital North offers a unique pediatric asthma care program through the emergency department at Clarian North Medical Center in Carmel. Riley Emergency Asthma Care and Teaching (REACT) provides a specialist on weekday evenings to help parents while their child receives medical care for an asthma attack. At other times, parents can receive help through a short video.**

For more information, visit [rileyhospital.org](http://rileyhospital.org).



Affiliated with Indiana University School of Medicine, Clarian Health operates Methodist Hospital, Indiana University Hospital and Riley Hospital for Children campuses as a single hospital under Indiana law.

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