



Fast Statistics: In 2009 (US) it is estimated that 17.5 million adults and 7 million children suffer from asthma.

Health Fact Sheet-Asthma

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic breathing disorder that causes episodes of coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath. These symptoms are caused by spasms of the air passages. Children find it more difficult to breathe because their air passages swell and fill with mucus.

What are the signs and symptoms of asthma?

- * Coughing
- * Shortness of breath
- * Rapid breathing
- * Unusual fatigue
- * Sweating
- * Flared nostrils
- * Hunched over posture
- * Panting/breathing through the mouth
- * Wheezing
- * Chest hurts or feels heavy and tight
- * Rapid heartbeat
- * Itchy throat/ dry mouth
- * Vomiting
- * Pursed lipped breathing
- * Retractions

What can trigger an asthma attack?

- * Pollen and mold
- * Chemical irritants
- * Air fresheners
- * Vigorous exercise
- * Certain foods
- * Grass clippings
- * Animal dander
- * Perfumes
- * Disinfectants
- * Infections/Colds
- * Car exhaust
- * Tobacco smoke

What should child care providers do if they take care of a child with asthma?

- Have an asthma action plan on file. This is a specific care plan for the child with asthma, filled out by the child's doctor with input from the parent's and the child care provider.
- Wash hands!
- Avoid carpets and fabric-covered toys.
- Damp mop and wipe non-porous surfaces.
- Ban furry and feathered pets.

- Keep windows closed during high pollen periods.
- Change vacuum, heating and cooling filters frequently.
- When children have colds, give them plenty of water.
- When it is cold and dry outside, have children with asthma wear a scarf that covers their mouth.
- Encourage children with asthma to warm up for active play and to play as long as they feel they are able.

Resources:

The Pediatric/Adult Asthma Coalition of NJ (Asthma Action Plan)

www.pacnj.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (various articles to download; podcast and videos are also available)

<http://www.cdc.gov/health/default.htm>