

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

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It takes your breath away!

Asthma is one of the most common frequent diseases of childhood. Approximately 4 million children under 18 years old have had an asthma attack in the past 12 months. Asthma is when swelling occurs in the airways of the lungs. This is usually caused by a reaction to an allergy or other irritant. It can sometimes be life-threatening but in most cases can be controlled at home or at the doctor's office. If you think your child might be suffering from asthma, please visit your doctor or health clinic. They will be able to answer all your questions and can find treatment options specific to your child.

ASTHMA TRIGGERS



Most susceptible to asthma attacks are children:

- ▶ with a family history of asthma
- ▶ who have allergies
- ▶ by the age of 5
- ▶ who have exposure to secondhand smoke

Please see other side for information on **FREE** inspections and support groups



SECONDHAND SMOKE

Secondhand smoke (passive smoke) comes from the burning end of a cigarette, from cigars and from the smoker's exhaled smoke. Not only does it trigger asthma, but passive smoke is a major cause of other lung infections in children. **Solution:** Choose not to smoke in your home or car, and do not allow others to do so.

PETS

Pet's skin flakes, urine, and saliva can be asthma triggers. **Solution:** Try keeping your pets outdoors, or if the situation is very serious, you may need to consider finding a new home for them. Keep pets away from the bedroom and fabric covered furniture or carpets.

DUST MITES

They live in mattresses, pillows, carpets, fabric-covered furniture, bedcovers, clothes, and stuffed toys. **Solution:** Wash sheets, blankets and toys once a week in hot water. Keep stuffed toys off beds. Cover mattresses and pillows in dust-proof plastic covers.

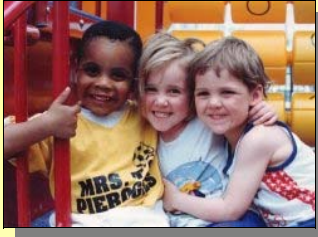
PESTS

Droppings or body parts of pests such as cockroaches or rodents can be asthma triggers. **Solution:** The best thing to do is get rid of the pests. Also, keep all food or garbage contained. Pests live off of left over crumbs and trash so keep living spaces clean.

MOLDS

Molds grow where moisture is present. Lowering the moisture also helps reduce other triggers, such as dust mites and cockroaches. **Solution:** Wash mold off and dry any excess water completely. Ceiling tiles and carpet may need to be replaced. Make sure leaky plumbing is fixed. Maintain low indoor humidity around 30-50%.

Please contact a doctor or a health clinic if your child has frequent coughing or respiratory infections!



STEPS to a HealthierPinellas offers:

FREE HOME INSPECTIONS

to assist in identifying asthma triggers in your home/apartment.
(This is a voluntary program, offering suggestions and recommendations only!)

Call Stan: 507-4336 ext.1336 *(Available in most areas of South Pinellas)*

FREE ASTHMA SUPPORT GROUPS AND CASE MANAGEMENT

For more information contact Cindy Gould: 767-4376
All Children's Hospital
801 6th Street South, St-Petersburg
(2nd floor, Class Room #3)

ASK A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

What is an asthma attack?

Asthma causes breathing problems called asthma attacks or episodes of asthma. During an asthma attack, the lungs and airways overreact to certain triggers causing:

- the lining of the airways to become inflamed and swollen
- tightening of the muscles that surround the airways
- an increased production of mucus

Breathing then becomes harder and may hurt. There may be coughing. There may be a wheezing or whistling sound, which is typical of asthma. Wheezing occurs because of the rush of air which moves through the narrowed airways.

If you have a question for a health professional, please write to:

Pinellas County Health Department
Office of Chronic Disease Prevention
205 Dr. Martin Luther King St. N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Please ask your doctor about your child's asthma attack treatment options.

For more information about asthma, visit these Websites:

- www.lungusa.org
- www.cdc.gov
- www.pinellaswellness.com
- www.noattacks.org
- www.aafa.org
- www.epa.gov/
- www.umm.edu/non_trauma/asthma

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