

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas County

Asthma: Indoor Air Pollution

When we talk about air pollution, we often think of smog, chemicals produced by factories or exhaust from cars. These are problems that usually affect the air outdoors, but most of us spend much of our lives inside buildings. We go to school or work indoors. We eat our meals, do our homework, play and sleep indoors. All of that time, we breathe air that is in the room.

Indoor air can become polluted, or spoiled, by adding harmful things to it, just as outside air can. For example, household cleaners, dust, paints, bug sprays, smoke from cooking or cigarettes, and fibers from some building materials all can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe. We often need to keep doors and windows closed to keep the insides of our buildings cool in the summer or warm in the winter. This can trap pollutants inside for a long time. It also can make places for insects, dust mites and molds to live.

Some pollutants of indoor air are so irritating that they can bother anyone who breathes them. These include paints, asbestos fibers, smoke, cleaners, insect sprays and chemicals used on fabrics. Other pollutants can cause more problems for some people than for others. For example, some people are allergic to things in dust. When they breathe dusty air, people with allergies may start to sneeze or have runny noses and itchy eyes.

How can we keep the air inside our homes and other buildings clean and safe? We can be careful about using chemical cleaners, paints, glues and pesticides, and, instead, use products that don't pollute. We can reduce the amount of dust in the air by changing the filters in our home heating and cooling systems.

We can get rid of some sources of indoor air pollution completely. For example, smoking is no longer allowed in public buildings, such as movie theaters, hospitals, restaurants and schools. Most importantly, we can remember how important it is to have clean air to breathe inside our homes, schools and offices.

Each of us can do something to help keep our indoor air clean.

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov>

Tips for Healthy Living

Try these and use fewer chemicals in your home!



Mix equal parts of powdered sugar and baking soda or borax. Set the mixture out in a small dish to control cockroaches.



Wash your pet with lots of soapy water to drown fleas instead of using chemical sprays.



Buy pure beeswax furniture polishes and candles.

<http://kids.niehs.nih.gov>



Use natural, untreated fabrics.



Use baking soda as an air freshener for refrigerators, garbage cans and carpets.



Coat plant leaves with soapy water to kill small insects.



Mix 1 tablespoon of vinegar with 1 liter (quart) of water to make a cleaner for windows and floors.

Asthma Action Plan



An asthma action plan is a set of instructions your doctor will write down for you and your family on how to prevent and control asthma flare-ups. An asthma action plan helps you keep your child's asthma under control. When your child's asthma is controlled, breathing problems won't keep them from playing sports, having fun, and doing whatever they want to do. Following a plan can also mean fewer trips to the doctor or to the emergency department.

What's in the Plan?

A key part of the plan will tell you exactly what to do if your child has a flare-up. It will say which medicine to take and how much of it to take. It also will say when you need to call the doctor or take your child to the emergency department.

A typical asthma action plan also would cover:

- How to avoid your child's asthma triggers or things that cause asthma flare-ups
- How to catch flare-ups early and treat them

Because each child's asthma is different, each child's plan is different. Here's some other information that might also be in your child's plan:

- steps your child should take before exercising
- how to use a peakflow meter
- the names of your child's medicines and how to take them
- the doctor's phone number and other important numbers

www.kidshealth.org

Understand Your Plan

Talk with your doctor about your child's plan and ask questions if something doesn't make sense. Some instructions in the plan will apply every day, not just when you're having breathing problems. For example, your child will want to avoid stuff that makes their asthma worse and take controller medicine regularly, if your doctor has prescribed it for you.

You may also want to give a copy of the action plan to your child's school nurse, teacher, and anyone else that takes care of your children. Your child should probably keep a copy of it with them too. Following this plan will help keep you and your child in action!

Myth:

You grow out of asthma or asthma gets better as you get older.

The Facts:

Asthma is a life-long condition. A child's asthma can get better or worse over time and some very young children with asthma may get much better as they (and their lungs) grow, but for most people, asthma is present for the rest of their life.

<http://kids.sutterhealth.org>

What Makes Someone Develop Asthma?

What actually triggers or causes asthma can vary from person to person. Some children are just born with a greater chance of developing asthma. There are also some common asthma triggers that can cause a child to develop asthma. These triggers are tobacco smoke, air pollution, pollen, animals, sudden weather changes, mold, and viral infections.

Studies show that children whose parents smoke are twice as likely to develop asthma compared to children of nonsmoking parents. Also, children whose mothers smoked during pregnancy are more likely to be born with smaller airways. This can greatly increase the child's chances of developing asthma.



<http://www.nsc.org/ehc/indoor/asthma.htm>

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For information about Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 727-820-4113

