

## Ask the Expert: Controlling Childhood Asthma

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**Q: My child has asthma. What can I do to control the attacks?**



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A: While there is no cure for asthma, children and parents can control symptoms such as shortness of breath and chest pain by identifying the causes.

These "triggers" can be found almost anywhere, and everyone responds to them differently. The following is a list of common triggers of asthma attacks:

- Respiratory infections such as cold and flu. This is the most common cause of asthma symptoms.
- Allergens such as pollen, mold, dust, cockroaches and pet dander
- Exercise that causes heavy breathing
- Emotions and high stress
- Certain times of the day or seasons in the year, such as close to bedtime or high-pollen time during the spring
- Smoking or second-hand smoke
- Weather changes such as cold air, dust storms or a change from hot to cold
- Food allergies
- Heartburn, acid reflux or an upset stomach
- Medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen

Not all asthma sufferers will respond to these triggers, but once he or she has identified what brings on an attack, it is important to know how to control them.

For parents who smoke, it is important to ban all smoking in the car or the house, since the chemicals lodge in the upholstery. Even wearing a "smoking jacket" while smoking outside can help, as long as the jacket is left outside the house.

It is important to note that asthma does not have to control your or your child's life. Keep your doctor in the loop, and follow all instructions given for controlling medications and breathing treatments. Learn your triggers and turn on your radar so you can avoid them. With these simple actions, asthma sufferers can maintain a normal and active life.