

Healthy Home Healthy Child

Learning About Asthma – What You Can Do

WINTER 2009

DEAR PARENTS,

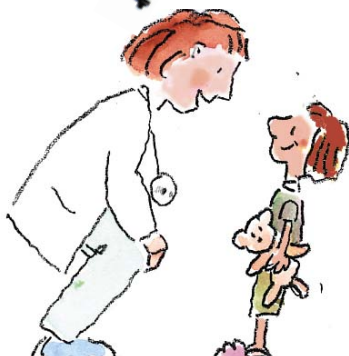
The more we learn about children's asthma, the more we know how important it is for parents to take steps at home to control your child's asthma.

The Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH) has found that many environmental factors—including air pollution—may play a role in children developing asthma. We want to help you with this important job!

Sincerely,

CCCEH

Did you know that asthma is the number one reason for kids missing school on a regular basis?



Asthma Can Look Like This

Take Charge and Control Your Child's Asthma

Better control may mean . . .

- ▶ less missed school days—Asthma is the number one reason for kids missing school on a regular basis.*
- ▶ less emergency room visits or hospital stays
- ▶ no side effects from medicine
- ▶ your child will sleep through the night
- ▶ your child will be able to run and play

* Source: Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a **chronic** disease that causes breathing problems. When your child has asthma, the lungs' **airways** get **narrow and swollen** and can get clogged with mucus. Children with asthma can have some or all of these **symptoms** (problems you can easily see and hear):

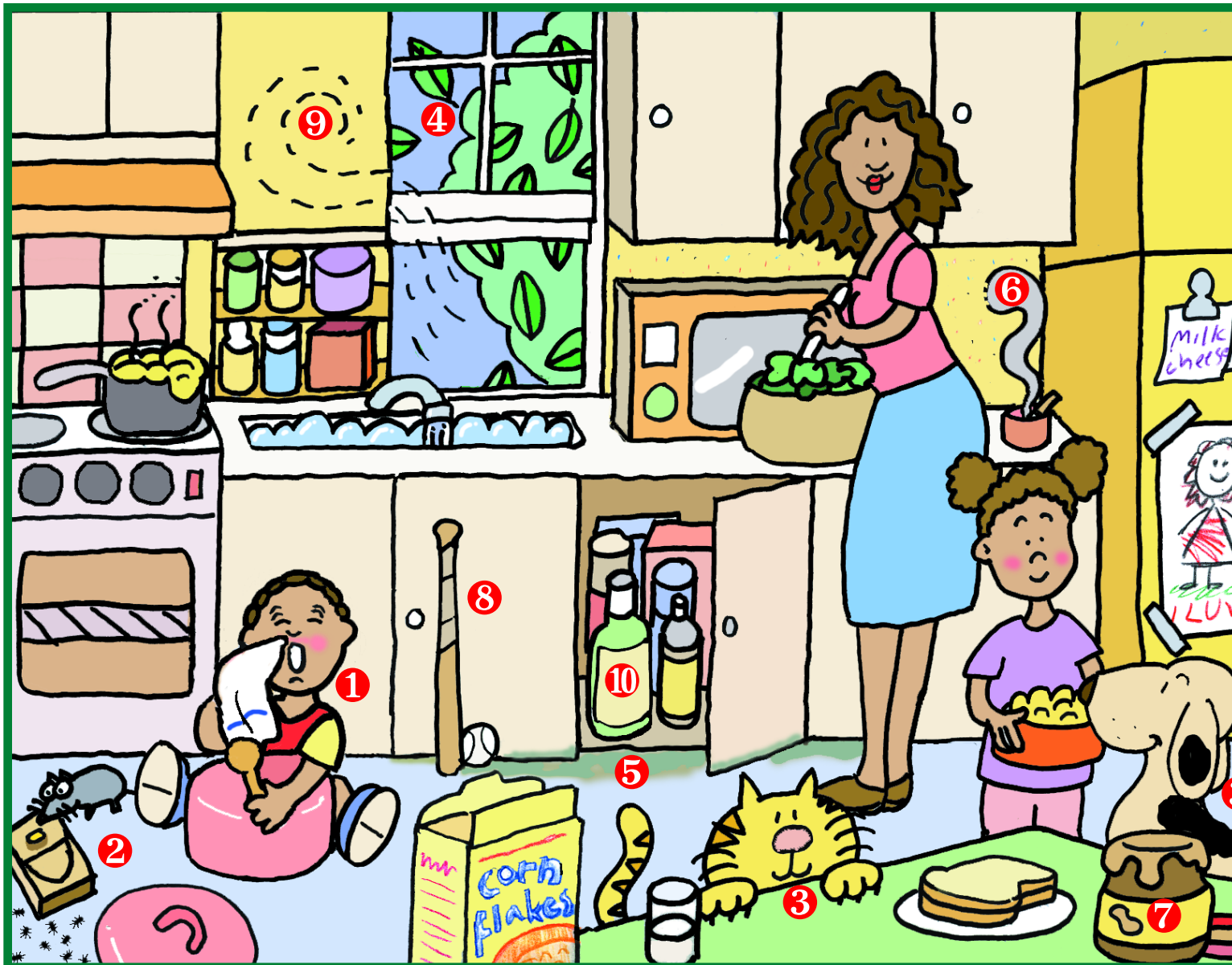
- ▶ wheezing
(a whistling sound when you breathe)
- ▶ chest tightness
- ▶ shortness of breath
- ▶ coughing



Asthma is a chronic disease condition. This means asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. **Avoiding triggers** and **taking the right medicine** can go a long way to help your child control their asthma.

Triggers make asthma symptoms worse

Triggers are little and big things that can cause asthma symptoms and can make them worse. Triggers are all around us—inside and outside our homes. So it's important to know **what** triggers bother your child, **when** these triggers bother your child, and **how** you can avoid them.



Find the asthma triggers. Match the trigger in the list with the right item in the picture.

Asthma Medications

We know that children stay healthier and have less asthma symptoms when they take their medication correctly. There are two different kinds of asthma medicines.

Rescue medicines

These medicines are used for an attack (flare-up). Your child breathes in (inhales) the medicine and it goes right into the lungs. Rescue medicines work quickly, open up the airways, and make it easier to breathe.

Controller medicines

These medicines work over a long period of time to prevent future asthma attacks. Your child takes this medicine everyday to prevent asthma attacks and flare-ups. It is important to take these medications as prescribed because they are doing important work to control asthma every day.

FIND THE ASTHMA TRIGGERS

- Colds or the flu
- Cockroaches, dust mites, rats or mice
- Cats, dogs, or other animals
- Pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds
- Mold
- Cigarette smoke, air pollution or smog
- Food allergies
- Physical activity (such as exercise or playing sports)
- Cold air
- Odors or strong smells (like cleaning products or perfume)

Ask your doctor for an asthma action plan

An **asthma action plan** tells you how to prevent and manage asthma attacks. It will help you know when and how to give your child medicines. Always share this plan with family members, teachers, and babysitters!

Trigger Tips

► Do not smoke

It's absolutely clear—cigarette smoke harms your health and it will make your child's asthma worse. At home or in the car, smoke gets trapped and remains in the air and upholstery for a long time.

Tips

- If you or someone in your home must smoke, do it outdoors, always, no exceptions.
- You can get help to quit smoking. Call 311 to find local quitting programs.

► Control bugs and pests

Cockroaches, mice and rats leave behind droppings and these are asthma triggers. Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a set of safer methods for keeping your home clean of pests.

Tips

- Keep counters, sinks, tables, and floors free of open food, water or clutter.
- Seal cracks and openings around or inside cabinets and where plumbing for the kitchen or bathroom comes through the wall.
- Use low-toxic pest control products such as gels, baits, and sticky traps.

► Clean up mold

Mold may trigger asthma. Mold grows in damp places such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Tips

- You can make a simple, safe cleaner to remove mold. For example, you can mix one gallon of water and one cup of non-chlorine bleach together.
- Use exhaust fans or open a window in the bathroom and kitchen when showering, cooking, or washing dishes.

► Reduce the spread of the cold and flu.

Colds and flu can cause asthma-like symptoms.

Tips

- Make sure you and your child wash your hands often, with soap and warm water. Make it a habit! Use an antibacterial hand sanitizer when you don't have access to soap and water.
- If you do have a cold, don't touch your eyes, nose, and mouth because you can spread germs.

ANSWERS TO THE TRIGGERS GAME: 1-Colds or the flu; 2-cockroaches, dust mites, rats or mice; 3-Cats, dogs, or other animals; 4-Pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds; 5-Mold; 6-Cigarette smoke, air pollution or smog; 7-Food allergies; 8-Physical activity ; 9-Cold air; 10-Odors or strong smells.



Healthy Home
Healthy Child

Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University
100 Haven Avenue, Tower III, Suite 25F
New York, NY 10032
<http://www.ccceh.org>



US EPA 2005
Children's Environmental Health
Excellence Award

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Get Involved!

Join a Clean Air Campaign in Your Community!

- ▶ **Clean Air NY** members work to improve the air quality in the New York metro area. Call 877-458-8247 or visit www.cleanairny.org.
- ▶ **WE ACT** for Environmental Justice works with the community to improve environmental health, protection and policy in Northern Manhattan. Call 347-465-8483 or visit www.weact.org.

Resource Corner

Local Asthma Resources: Asthma Basics for Children

You can find asthma education workshops and outreach for child care and health facilities, schools, and other organizations in Northern Manhattan. Call 212-304-6521 or go to www.asthmabasics.org.

American Lung Association (ALA)

You can attend asthma lectures in your neighborhood and get reading materials and educational packets. Call 212-315-8700 to reach your local New York Chapter.

Resource Corner (con't)

Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health

You can learn about environmental health research and get information about how the environment may affect asthma, neurodevelopmental disease, and cancer risk in children. Call 212-304-7280 or go to www.ccceh.org.

NYC's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Asthma Action Line

Call 311 to access the city's help line to get more information for asthma and referrals to physicians.

Washington-Heights Inwood Network (WIN) for Asthma

Learn about the program and monthly asthma workshops with a clinician. Call 212-305-2076.



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FOR CHILDREN'S
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MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
Columbia University