

Managing Asthma

Although there is no cure for asthma, it can be controlled through proper education and management. Asthma affects each child differently, so it is important to know his/her warning signs and triggers.

WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs are symptoms that show you a child is having difficulty with asthma. Every child has their own unique set of warning signs. Recognize and know what level of action to take when you see a warning sign.

Level I - These are common warning signs that happen early in an episode.

- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Feeling tired or weak
- Itchy chin or throat
- Watery eyes
- Dark circles under eyes
- Stomachache

HOW TO RESPOND

- 1) Move child away from any triggers. If child is around something that bothers their asthma, try to leave the situation.
- 2) Administer quick-relief medication to relieve symptoms. Medicine should work within 15 minutes.
- 3) Monitor child's warning signs. Make sure symptoms aren't getting worse.

Level II - These common warning signs and symptoms are more serious.

- Medications are not working or do not last
- Increase in coughing or tightness in chest
- Wheezing
- Inability to do usual activities

HOW TO RESPOND

- 1) Take the same steps as with Level I: move away from triggers, take quick-relief medication and monitor warning signs.
- 2) If symptoms worsen or are not better within 15 minutes of using medication, follow child's asthma action plan and consider calling 911.

Level III - These are common severe warning signs and symptoms.

- Severe shortness of breath
- Difficulty walking or talking (inability to finish a sentence)
- Retractions (sucking in skin at ribs and neck)
- Paling, blue or gray lips and nail beds

HOW TO RESPOND

- 1) Call 911. Any ONE of these symptoms requires immediate medical help.
- 2) If you haven't already, administer quick-relief medication.

Adapted from Asthma Action Plan in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. So You Have Asthma. National Heart Blood and Lung Institute. 2007. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/asthma_have_asthma.pdf