

About Your Child's Asthma Action Plan



An Asthma Action Plan is a vital part of managing your child's health. Make sure to share your child's Asthma Action Plan. Share it with caregivers and family members. Share it with your child's teachers and other school staff. If your child doesn't have a plan or it's not up-to-date, talk with their healthcare provider right away.

What's an Asthma Action Plan?

This plan describes how to manage your child's asthma. It says what to do based on your child's symptoms and peak flow readings. It has information about your child's medicines and triggers. It says when to call their healthcare provider. Your child's Asthma Action Plan should be updated at each visit with their healthcare provider. This should be done at least once a year.

The Asthma Action plan will have directions based on color zones. The color zones are:

- **Green Zone: Go.** Your child is breathing well.
- **Yellow Zone: Caution.** Your child has some breathing problems.
- **Red Zone: Danger.** Your child has serious breathing problems.

Your child's Asthma Action Plan should have information about the below topics.

Medicines

Include directions about your child's medicines and when they should take them. This will be based on symptoms or peak flow readings. It may also be based on directions from your child's healthcare provider. Make sure you and your child know how to use all the medicines correctly. Learn this from your child's healthcare provider. Then you can show others how to use them correctly. These medicines may include:

- **Long-term control (maintenance) medicine.** These medicines work to reduce airway swelling and inflammation. They can also help relax muscles around your child's airways. Your child should take these medicines as scheduled. They are also sometimes given on an as-needed basis.
- **Quick-relief (rescue) medicine.** These medicines are fast-acting. They will give your child quick relief when their symptoms start. They relax and open your child's airways. Your child should always have access to this medicine in case of an emergency.
- **Inhaled corticosteroids.** These medicines are often taken for chronic symptoms. They may be used regularly. But they also can be used as needed. They are given to reduce inflammation in the lungs. This helps open your child's airways. They are inhaled right into the airways.
- **Oral steroids.** If your child's symptoms are severe, they may need to take steroids by mouth. This will be directed by the healthcare provider.

Asthma symptoms

Your child's symptoms will determine what color zone they're in. The color zones are:

- **Green Zone: Go.** Your child has no coughing, wheezing, or trouble breathing.
- **Yellow Zone: Caution.** Your child has coughing, wheezing, tight feeling in the chest, or trouble breathing.
- **Red Zone: Danger.** Your child has trouble breathing, coughing, or wheezing not helped by medicine.

List your child's asthma symptoms and what to do if they occur. Add specific directions about your child's medicines. Write the name, dose, how to take them, and how often. Add any other details about why to take them.

Peak flow meter readings

Peak flow readings also define what color zone your child is in. The peak flow color zones are:

- **Green Zone: Go.** This is a peak flow reading that is **80% to 100%** of your child's personal best.
- **Yellow Zone: Caution.** This is a peak flow reading that is **50% to 79%** of your child's personal best, or your child's peak flow reading has **decreased by at least 15%**.
- **Red Zone: Danger.** This is a peak flow reading that is **less than 50%** of your child's personal best.

You will need to find your child's personal best for peak flow readings. Ask your child's healthcare provider to teach you how.

Asthma triggers

List any triggers or air irritants (allergens) that make your child's asthma worse. Your child should stay away from any substances that may set off their asthma symptoms. Find out what triggers may be in school. For example, animals, such as gerbils or hamsters, may be kept in your child's classroom. This may be a problem if pet dander is a trigger.

Special situations

Your child's Asthma Action Plan should have directions for special situations. These include:

- Exercise
- Recess
- Gym class
- School trips

You will need to note:

- **When your child needs certain medicines.** Your child may need to take medicines before recess, gym class, or exercise. List the medicine's name and how much your child should take. Include plans for giving your child medicine on field trips.
- **Activities your child needs to avoid.** List all activities that your child should not take part in.
- **Special safety steps.** List any special safety steps that your child should take. They may need to wear a scarf or ski mask on cold days. They may need to not exercise outside when there are high levels of pollen, mold, or other air irritants. Include any directions from your child's healthcare provider.

Emergency information

Be sure to include:

- **Contact information.** List the name and phone number of your child's healthcare provider. Write the name of your child's emergency contacts, legal guardians, or caregivers.
- **When to call the healthcare provider.** Include clear directions on what to do when your child's symptoms are getting worse, and when to call the healthcare provider. Add any other directions from your child's provider.

- **When to call 911.** Put in clear directions on when emergency care is needed. Direct others to call 911 if your child's symptoms are not responding to treatment, or your child is in respiratory distress.

Meeting with caregivers and teachers

It's also important to meet and talk about your child's Asthma Action Plan with all their caregivers. Talk with your child's school nurse, teachers, coaches, and other staff members. Do this at the start of each school year. Your child can be there, too. You may need to meet more times during the school year.

What to do

When you meet with them:

- Review the Asthma Action Plan.
- Make sure everyone understands the Asthma Action Plan color zones. Make sure they know what to do if your child is in the yellow or red zones.
- Make sure everyone knows how to use an inhaler, spacer, and peak flow meter. This includes caregivers, family members, teachers, and other school staff.
- Talk about any school policies that affect your child's asthma management. Some schools let kids keep their quick-relief medicine in their bag or locker. Other schools keep medicines in the school office or the school nurse's office. Many states now have laws about this. The laws require that students be allowed to carry and take asthma medicines on their own. Discuss local policies with your child's healthcare provider and the school staff.

Sample Asthma Action Plans

Below is a list of examples of Asthma Action Plans. Some plans come in both English and Spanish. Ask your child's healthcare provider which plan is best for your child.

American Lung Association

- For home and school: www.lung.org/getmedia/aa8ce6f5-667e-4726-b4ab-8ac8d5d448e4/fy20-ala-asthma-action-plan_home_school.pdf

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

- www.nhlbi.nih.gov/resources/asthma-action-plan-2020

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

- General plan: www.aafa.org/media/1601/asthma-action-plan-aafa.pdf

CDC

- General plan: www.cdc.gov/asthma/action-plan/documents/asthma-action-plan-508.pdf

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