

# Children and Asthma in America

## Helping To Alleviate Childhood Asthma: Knowledge Is Power

(NAPSA)—Parents and caregivers of asthmatic children know how difficult breathing can be for children—heavy coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath. But understanding the effects of triggers in the environment and forming an asthma action plan to counter those triggers is a step in managing asthma.

The first step to keeping your child healthy is knowing what your child's triggers are. Because you are with your child daily, you can best notice the patterns that set off your child's breathing problems. Be sure you report your findings back to the doctor.

The most common triggers are colds and allergens. An allergen (e.g. animal dander, pollen, mold spores) is a substance that can irritate the lungs of people who have allergies and asthma. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, most children who have asthma or similar breathing problems have allergies.

Some common allergies or allergy sources that can trigger asthma-like symptoms include molds, fungi, pollen, dust, furry or feathered pets and even cockroaches. Other sources include exercise like running, cigarette smoke and foods like nuts or others containing sulfites.

Knowing your child's triggers will help you steer clear of them. You can follow some tips to help your child feel his or her best.

- Clean and dust weekly, using a vacuum with a HEPA filter and/or microfiltration bags.

- Wash bedding weekly in hot water, avoid feather pillows, and put a dust mite cover on your child's mattress and pillows.

- To reduce pet dander, keep pets out of your child's room, out of the car, and wash your pets often.

- When inside, replace heat and air conditioning filters monthly, use air conditioning in the summer, and use an exhaust fan when cooking.

After you have identified your



**Having a plan can help keep children with asthma secure.**

child's triggers, your doctor will work with you to develop your child's action plan.

Every child's asthma action plan should be personalized for his or her unique situation. It's easier to control your child's breathing problems effectively when you have specific directions on which action to take.

Your action plan is a great guideline to help you manage your child's breathing problems. But it can also be helpful to other caregivers involved with your child, including family, school staff, and daycare workers. Here are some tips to make sure you get the most out of your child's action plan:

- Make a copy of the plan and give it to each of the people who are involved with caring for your child. (Be sure you give them new copies any time that you update the plan.)

- Keep an updated version of the plan with you at all times. You never know when your child's breathing problems may crop up. It can happen even when you are away from home.

- Be sure to review the action plan with your child's doctor at least once or twice a year, or any time that your child's condition or treatment changes markedly.

For complete information on asthma triggers and asthma action plans, visit [www.everydaykidz.com](http://www.everydaykidz.com).