Easing your child's asthma

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(HealthDay)—If your child is among the 10 percent of kids with asthma, you want to do everything you can to control it.

Start by working with your child's allergist to identify his or her unique asthma triggers and ways to avoid them.

Common asthma triggers include:

- Secondhand smoke from cigarettes, wood-burning stoves and campfires,
- Pet dander from furry or feathered animals,
- Cockroaches or cockroach allergen,
- Dust mites in home furnishings and stuffed toys,
- Pollen and outdoor pollution,
- Odors/fragrances from household products to perfumes,
- Weather extremes,
- Stress and other emotions,
- Exercise,
- Some foods.

Secondhand smoke is especially dangerous. Keep a smoke-free home and car, and avoid other smokers. If you smoke, quit.

Almost any pet can pose a problem. Talk to your child's allergist before buying a pet. If you already have one, ask how to limit triggers, like keeping it out of his or her bedroom.

Thorough cleaning can help with triggers ranging from mold to cockroaches to dust mites living in bedding, stuffed animals and carpeting. Be alert to outdoor air pollution and indoor odors from paint, cleaning products and fragrances. Exercise, everyday stress and even changes in the weather can bring on symptoms.

Have a written asthma action plan from the allergist that outlines all the steps to take in case of an asthma attack. A copy should be with the nurse at your child's school or daycare center.

A child's asthma action plan should include:

- A list of triggers to avoid,
- Easily understood prescription drug instructions,
- Emergency contact information for you and all your child's health care providers,
- Steps to take as soon as symptoms start,
- Steps to take in a breathing emergency.

Understanding asthma will help ease even a young child's fears.

More information: Check out the parent and children pages from the American Lung Association for more ideas, including how to identify common asthma triggers and avoid them.

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