

Lifestyle Tips



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Don't Let Asthma Keep Your Child Out of the Game

Sitting on the sidelines and watching your friends have fun is no way to spend your childhood. Once thought to be a reason to curtail sport participation, asthma is no longer seen as a barrier to engage in physical activity. If you learn how to keep your child's asthma under control, they can participate in many different types of activities, both indoor and outdoor. Your child may even be inspired to participate in physical activity by knowing that, in fact, many elite athletes who compete at the international level have been diagnosed with asthma or experience exercise-induced asthma.

Asthma is a condition that makes it hard to breathe and can be triggered by various things like cold or dry air, dust, pollen, and pollution. Although physical activity and sport can be triggers for asthma, studies indicate that engaging your kids in physical activity will improve not only physical, but also psychosocial outcomes (Philpott et al., 2010). Most importantly, getting physically active may improve breathing, and lead to fewer asthma attacks. The key is to understand how to



prevent and to lessen the severity of asthma attacks so that children can continue to participate in activities that they enjoy.

If you have a child with asthma, here are some tips to get them active:

Talk to a doctor. Prior to starting any new physical activity program every child with a chronic illness such as asthma should be evaluated by an experienced doctor to identify any contraindications to participation in



certain physical activities. Develop an asthma management plan; together with your doctor, identify the severity of the condition, known triggers, and interventions or actions to be taken if an attack occurs.

Identify “asthma friendly” activities that your child would like to try.

Activities such as swimming, bicycling, golf, inline skating, and calisthenics are suggested because they allow your child to control how hard and fast they are breathing, allow them to breathe through their nose at all times which doesn’t dry out the airways, and can be done in controlled environments.

Ease into it. Although warming up before exercise is important for everyone, those with asthma will benefit even more. Make sure that the warm-up is slow and steady and lasts 10-15 minutes. Don’t forget to cool down too!

Respect the body. Stay away from locations that may trigger asthma. Teach your kids to help their airways by breathing through their nose instead of their mouth. Take it easy on

the days that their asthma symptoms are really bothering them.

Take breaks. Make sure your child understand exercise intensity and takes a break when needed. Taking breaks can lower exercise intensity and prevent some asthma symptoms.

Mix it up. Allow your child to try a variety of different activities, such as in-line skating one day and swimming another.

Educate teachers and coaches.

Don’t let kids bow out of gym class using asthma as the excuse. Give teachers and sport coaches the information they need about your child’s personal asthma management plan.

So, encourage your child to get out there and get moving! With good habits and today’s medicines, they can join their friends on the basketball court, in the pool, or even on the dance floor.

