

Managing Childhood Asthma

Kids can develop asthma at any age. In fact, it's quite common.

"Our daughter Kendyll is eight years old and she has asthma."

"She's hard headed, which she gets both from me and her mother. Strong-willed. If she sets her mind to something, she's going to do it."

Kendyll Kloskowski found out she has asthma four years ago. Her father has it, too. But Kendyll and her parents keep her asthma under control by using something called her asthma action plan...

"Her asthma action plan is everything for her. If we do not follow that accordingly, she is in the hospital. They set it up for her specifically based upon previous experiences and how she handles the medicines. If she starts to struggle and we don't use her action plan, we can guarantee we'll be in the hospital."

Your doctor helps create your action plan just for you, depending on the kinds of things that can trigger your asthma. Your triggers may be different from other kids who have asthma. They might include dirty air outside, chemicals, changes in the weather, smoke, dust, stress or, for some kids, hard exercise.

Your action plan will also explain what medications to take, when to take them, and how much to take. And everyone who has asthma has their own personal action plan...

"The general goals of a child with asthma are to make sure they can do everything that they want to. They can run around and play just like normal kids..."

...To get rid of any regular coughing that they might have. And specifically, to make sure they can tolerate things like colds, tolerate being around their triggers without getting very, very sick or needing lots of medications."

Your plan might be set up like a stoplight, with three sections: green, yellow and red.

"The green zone is generally the regular medications that you should do all the time, whether you're healthy, whether you're sick, no matter what."

"The yellow zone is specifically where we put the rescue medications. It's what you should do when you're around a trigger or have symptoms when you're sick."

"The red zone includes what to do if you're having a really bad asthma attack."

Some kids use inhalers to breathe the asthma medicine right into their lungs. Others take pills. Your doctor will help you and your parents decide what medications are right for you. And, again, it's all laid out in your asthma action plan.

"Share the plan with anybody who's going to be around that child either by themselves or when they could be around their triggers. Some important people are anyone who's going to be watching the child, babysitters, grandparents, anybody they may be spending the weekend with. If there's two households, make sure the plan is in place at all the different households."

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Staying away from your asthma triggers might include some changes at home:

- Cleaning up any mold around the house
- Vacuuming and dusting regularly
- Limiting your contact with pets or
- Avoiding strong smells
- Dust mites might be another problem spot at home⁴, but there's a simple fix for that one...

"Teach them to use dust mite covers for their mattresses and pillows. Nearly every asthmatic is going to have some sort of reaction to dust mites."

Following your action plan will help you control your asthma...and do whatever you dream in life!

"They have to be ok with telling people, you know what, I need to step back for a second to take my medicine. But they can be professional athletes. They can be singers. They can be chefs. They can do whatever they want as long as they are taking their medication."

"My dreams and goals for Kendyll is that she gets everything she wants out of life. She's a dreamer...(edit)... I don't want asthma to hold her back from anything."