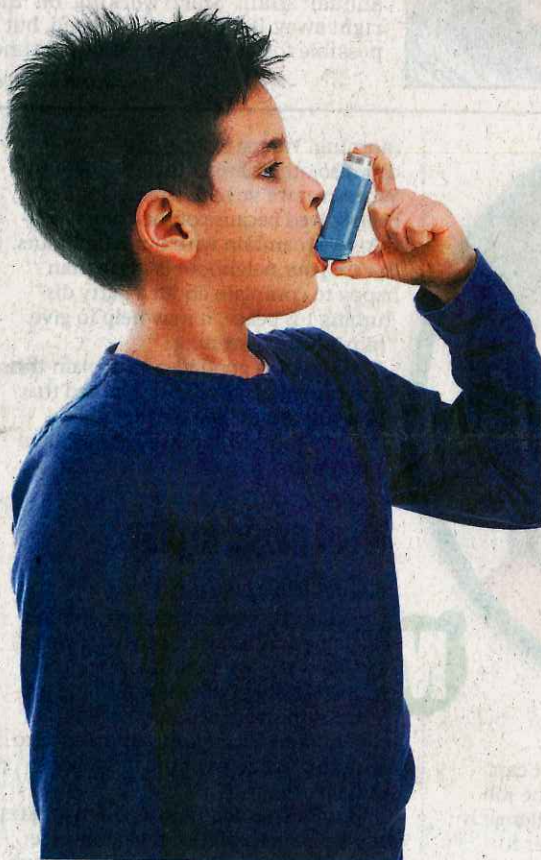


# LET YOUR CHILD BREATHE FREELY



**A**sthma is an inflammatory disease that affects the airways (small tubes that carry air in and out of lungs). And when children suffer from this condition, their airways become extra sensitive and react to substances called triggers which irritate them.

## BUT WHAT DOES ASTHMA DO?

It makes the sidewall of airways in lungs inflamed and the swollen air tubes become narrow with mucous. All this makes it difficult for air to go in and out of tubes. The causes for this condition are numerous — it could be because of genetic predisposition, lack of breast-feeding, environmental pollution, allergens (pollens) and change in lifestyle, such as increase in consumption of junk food with lack of physical activity. Sudden changes in climate, cold air, dust, smoke, pollen, stuffed toys, hair of animals, can also trigger asthma. Symptoms include coughing, wheezing, congestion in chest, shortness of breath.

## DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosing asthma in children is challenging because wheezing and coughing are common even in those who do not have this disease. But it can be diagnosed by careful clinical examination, history and in older children it is confirmed by lung function tests. Allergy test can be done in children with allergies.

## TREATMENT

Medications are of two types. Preventers protect the child's air tubes by making them less sensitive to asthma and triggers. Preventers are basically inhaled corticosteroids. Reliever, on the other hand, should be used on as-and-when-needed basis. While it helps relax the muscles, increasing use of relievers indicates poor control of asthma.

Inhalers are used as first line of therapy. Contrary to belief that they are reserved for non-responsive asthma, inhalers are better than tablets or syrup because a very small quantity of medicine is delivered directly to the lungs, affecting instantaneously. Inhaler dose is negligible, when compared to those in tablets. For children, inhalers should be used through spacer for adequate drug delivery. Younger children require mask as well.

To prevent asthma from aggravating, identify the triggers and avoid them. Take the right medication and regular check-up, which forms foundation for asthma treatment.



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