

Tips for Parents on Coping with Childhood Asthma & Allergies

TOOLS TO MANAGE ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

Asthma is the number 1 chronic disease in children in the U.S. with 1.8 million asthma-related emergency room visits and 500,000 hospitalizations annually, half for kids under the age of 15. Approximately 1 in 4 children now have asthma. A parent of an asthmatic or allergic child often feels helpless, frightened and frustrated when their child is in the midst of an attack or even in anticipation of another attack. Childhood asthma can mean sleepless nights, fatigue, tension and irritation for parents and siblings as well as for the affected child, diminishing the quality of life for the whole family. **There are ways** to cope with having an asthmatic or severely allergic child, ways to improve the quality of family life while handling these diseases. The Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America, Texas, offers this advice:

- ❖ *Be in control of your child's asthma; follow the medication and management plan developed with your healthcare provider and attend education programs to learn about the disease*
- ❖ *Learn your child's triggers and early warning symptoms; know how and when to administer medications and how to use asthma equipment - peak flow meters, spacers and nebulizers*
- ❖ *Use an asthma/allergy management action plan*
- ❖ *Both parents should be involved in caring for the child and work together to provide consistent care*
- ❖ *Involve older siblings to help the younger asthmatic child by reminding them when they need to take their medication; teach siblings the triggers and signs an episode is starting and what to do to help*
- ❖ *Share your child's trigger and symptom "list" with grandparents, relatives and neighbors; request they not smoke around the child and eliminate known allergens from their home if the child visits*
- ❖ *Don't make an asthmatic or allergic child the focus of everything the family does. Parents should make special time for their other children to avoid resentfulness*
- ❖ *Become the child's advocate with teachers, coaches, and other parents*
- ❖ *Allow your children to express their frustrations about their diseases*
- ❖ *Don't make the child feel they are a burden – don't build guilt*
- ❖ *Parents are people first. Leave your asthmatic child with caregivers sometimes to have time for each other to eliminate frustrations, promote family well-being and open lines of communication*

The information provided is for reference only and is not a substitute for professional medical care.



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