



Pediatric Clinic
ASTHMA EDUCATION HANDOUTS

What If Your Infant Has Asthma?

- The lungs of an infant do not function as efficiently as the lungs of an older child. As a result, a severe episode of asthma in an infant can quickly result in lung failure.

What to Do

- Follow the appointment schedule for checking on your infant's asthma. Your physician will want to see your baby regularly, even if your baby is not having symptoms.
- If your infant has asthma symptoms, act quickly. Follow the asthma action plan your physician developed for handling symptoms.
- Watch your infant closely for signs to seek emergency care. These signs include:
 - Breathing rate increases (to over 40 breaths per minute while the infant is sleeping). Count the number of breaths in 15 seconds and multiply by 4.
 - Suckling or feeding stops, or becomes difficult.
 - Skin between your infant's ribs is pulled tight.
 - Chest gets bigger.
 - Coloring changes (pale or red face; fingernails turn blue).
 - Cry changes in quality becomes softer and shorter.
 - Nostrils open wider (nasal flaring).
 - Grunting.
 - Be prepared. Do not wait until the last minute to learn how to handle an emergency. Have an asthma action plan that includes *how you'll get to your physician or hospital and who will watch your other children.*

Things to Be Aware of:

- Asthma is sometimes more difficult to diagnose in young infants compared to older children. Many "nonasthma" diseases can mimic asthma.
- Over one third of children with asthma will have symptoms under 1 year of age and more than half will have had symptoms by 2 years of age.
- Even in infants, there are many medicines available to treat asthma.



Concerns About Medications

- Many of the same medicines used for older children and adults can be safely used in infants.
- Most asthma medications have no long term effects that is, their use during infancy will not cause problems when your child is older or becomes an adult.

During An Asthma Episode DO NOT Do the Following:

- **Do not** give your infant large volumes of liquids to drink, just give normal amounts
- **Do not** have your infant breathe warm, moist air (such as mist from a warm shower)
- **Do not** have your infant breathe into a bag held tightly over his or her mouth
- **Do not** give your infant over-the-counter antihistamines and cold remedies unless advised by your care provider

