Patient education from National Jewish Health complements the health education you are receiving from your health care providers. Your providers should always be your primary resource for health education. Information from National Jewish Health patient education should not be construed as personal medical advice.

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Pedro, we'll give you medicine now to help you breathe better and stop coughing. We'll give you medicine to keep your asthma under control at home, too.

Don't worry. You'll be able to play tag and soccer without coughing soon.

Can you breathe better now, Pedro?

Here is some information on asthma for both of you to read, Pedro. You'll be taking inhaled medicine every day now. I'd like you to come back in two weeks so we can see how you are doing.

Mrs. Lopez, watch Pedro carefully to make sure the coughing is getting better. Also, watch to make sure that he isn't having trouble breathing.

So, Pedro. You'll have to tell me if your breathing doesn't feel good, OK?

Call us if you have trouble breathing or if you have questions.

Pedro, you'll have to pay attention, too.

OK, Mama.

Thank you, Doctor. Come on, Pedro. Let's go home. It's been a long day.
Later that night as Pedro sleeps...

Who are you? Where are we going?

I am the Asthma Wizard and we are going to learn about asthma.

Hee, Hee. Don’t worry. You’ll be home by morning.

Pedro, this isn’t any old classroom because this isn’t any old chalkboard.

Kiddos, go strap on an Inhaler Jet Pack.

Maddie... What are you doing here?

The wizard brought me here to help you learn about asthma.

You know about asthma?

Yep. My cousin has it. I do, too. You can’t tell, right? I can do anything I want.

Now grab each other’s hands.

CHALKBOARD! CHALKBOARD! Send us toward...HOW THE LUNGS WORK.

Welcome to Asthma for Kids. I am Arthur the Wizard, and this is my assistant Chloe.

I’ve had asthma since I was two years old. I’m here to help you learn how to control your asthma so you can stay healthy and feel better.

Oh, great. First I learn my lungs don’t work and I have to suck medicine into my lungs. Now I have to sit in class with a crazy wizard.

WHOOOOAAAAA! WHEEE!

TERR-I-FIC!
Airways have muscles wrapped around the outside. See? They look like stripes on a candy cane.

The airways have a lining that makes mucus, like what comes out of your nose when you have a cold. This mucus helps protect your lungs against dirt and germs.

Hold on tight, kids. We're about to see what happens to lungs with asthma.

The muscles tighten on the outside of the airways. The lining on the inside of the airways swells plus there's more mucus. That makes it harder to breathe.

This is S-S-S-Scary.

What was that?

That was a cough. Some people with asthma cough when their lungs aren't under good control.

Can't we do anything to help?

We sure can. Kiddos, start your engines.

Zoom around and around.

Get the medicine to the airways.

See? The medicine helps the airways open up again so it's easier for you to breathe.

What a relief. And the coughing stopped, too.

When the airway is open, air can get in and out easily.

Bet you didn't know this: we breathe 17,000 times a day.
Most people don’t have trouble with asthma all of the time. Look at Chloe. She plays on the basketball team and doesn’t miss school. Her asthma is under control, but certain things set it off.

Like you get a cold, or you breathe in cigarette smoke, or you exercise hard, or the air is chilly, or you’re near something you’re allergic to.

My asthma got worse so fast. How can I know when it’s about to happen?

Do you remember how you felt when your asthma attack started?

I coughed a lot. My chest felt tight and I couldn’t breathe.

My asthma attack came after I had a cold and I was outside playing.

My cousin is allergic to cats and he gets asthma when he’s around them.

Be a detective. Learn what makes your asthma worse. That way, you can be prepared.

Those are all common asthma signs. Some people also wheeze when they have an asthma attack. Wheezing is a whistling noise in your chest.

When you feel like you might be getting asthma, tell an adult right away so that they can help you.

Coughing:

Tight chest
Trouble breathing
Wheezing

You may also have a quick relief inhaler to help with your breathing.

Cough! Cough!

Sorry. Chalk dust makes my asthma worse.

I need my inhaler.

Ah, that’s better. Now, what were we talking about?

If my parents aren’t around, whom should I tell?

You and your parents can make a list of whom you should tell if you start to get the symptoms of an asthma attack.

I talked with my doctor, mom, and school nurse. I know about asthma signs and what to do, so I carry my quick relief medicine with me in case I need it. I still tell an adult right away.

Doctor
Mom/Dad
School Nurse
Teacher
Coach
What kind of medicine can Pedro take for his asthma?

Strap on your jetpacks, kiddos. We're heading back to the airways.

CHALKBOARD! CHALKBOARD!
Send us toward...
ASTHMA MEDICINES.

It feels tight in here.
Yes, it does, but when you have asthma, you can take two kinds of medicine to help you breathe. "Quick Relief" and "Long Term Control" medicines.

Quick Relief medicines quickly open your airways and make it easier to breathe right away.

Long Term Control medicines help prevent asthma before the attacks start. You take these medicines every day, even when you're feeling good.

Your doctor will tell you about the medicines you need.

Doctors have a lot of different medicines for asthma. Some medicines help the red, puffy airways.

"Some medicines help loosen the tight muscles around the airways."

There are a couple of different ways to take asthma medicine.

This is an inhaler. You push down on this little can and it puffs medicine out that you breathe into your lungs.

This is a spacer. It goes between your mouth and the inhaler. It makes it easier to use the inhaler.

This is a nebulizer. It turns the medicine into mist that you inhale into your lungs.

You may also end up using other kinds of medicines for your asthma. Your doctor will talk to you about what you need.
Pedro, what's wrong?
I'll never be able to play tag or soccer anymore.

Pedro, I promise you can still play sports and have fun.
You just have to figure out what makes your asthma worse and take your medicine.

I play soccer and basketball and I play at recess and go for bike rides with my Dad.

My cousin and I play football together all the time. Even some Olympic athletes have asthma.

There's so much to think about. How will I remember what to do?
The key to keeping asthma under control is to have an Action Plan.

The key to keeping asthma under control is to have an Action Plan.

Your parents and doctor will talk with you about your Asthma Action Plan so that you always know what to do to keep your asthma under good control.

AVOID THINGS THAT MAKE ASTHMA WORSE:

- Monitor my asthma signs:
  - TakeMedicine:

Everyone can watch your asthma signs. Some kids also use a Peak Flow Meter. It measures how well you're breathing.

Be sure that you and your parents share it with them.

How?

Pedro, seven million kids in the U.S. have asthma. Other kids at your school have asthma. I bet even some teachers do, too.

If you blow hard and fast into the meter and it goes to GREEN, you're breathing well.

But if the meter goes to YELLOW or RED, you're not breathing well and you need some medicine.
Of course, there are other things you can do to keep asthma away.

"Get plenty of rest."

The next day at the doctor's office...

He seems to be doing better, but I'm worried he'll have another attack.

It's OK, Mom. I know my asthma signs and if I follow my Action Plan, I'll be able to keep my asthma under good control.

"Wash your hands to get the cold and flu germs off."

"Keep your house clean."

Great job, young man. I see you did your asthma homework.

"Don't smoke and stay away from people who are smoking. It's bad for your lungs."

Hey, those are all things you're supposed to do to stay healthy anyway.

You're absolutely right. If you follow your Asthma Action Plan, you'll always know what to do if you have asthma signs.

Your asthma brochures were good, but you guys could use a good wizard with a magic chalkboard.
The Pediatric Asthma Program at National Jewish Health is a comprehensive program that offers patients and their families a multidisciplinary approach to the evaluation and management of their asthma. Our team of asthma specialists includes physicians who are leaders in pediatric asthma, allergy, immunology and pulmonology, supported by highly skilled nurses, psychosocial clinicians and rehabilitation therapists. Our physicians develop an individualized plan of care that reflects each patient's needs – from simple to complex cases.
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