



Delaware health aware

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Asthma

Adults can get it too

You might think of asthma as a child's disease. And it is. But millions of adults have it too. Many of them don't start having problems breathing until they reach their 50s or later.

Causes of asthma

No one is sure why some people get asthma when they're older. It appears that asthma in adults can be brought on by allergies after years of contact with such things as: » Smoke. » Mold. » Dust. » Feathered bedding.

Hormones might also be a factor. Women are more likely than men to get asthma as adults. Symptoms often start after pregnancy or menopause.

Viruses, such as the flu, also seem to bring on asthma in adults.

Colds that often go to the chest can be a warning sign of asthma.

Signs of asthma

You might have asthma if you:
» Cough. » Wheeze. » Have chest tightness. » Have problems breathing. » Get short of breath after exercise.

Any disease that makes it hard to breathe is serious. So see your doctor if you think you have asthma. Your doctor can check how well your lungs are working.

If you have asthma, there are ways to control it. You can limit contact with anything you might be allergic to. Medicines also can help you breathe easier. And your doctor can give you a plan to manage your asthma.

Source: Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

What not to do during a flare-up

There are a few things you should not do during an asthma attack. For example, you should never:

- Ignore your symptoms.
- Use cold medicines you bought at the store, unless your doctor says it's OK.
- Drink a lot of water.
- Breathe warm, moist air from the shower.
- Hold a paper bag over your nose and mouth while breathing.

Help your teen kick the habit



Teens don't always make good choices. And if your teen has made the choice to smoke, it's time to step in.

Have a serious talk. Tell your teen about the problems smoking brings. If warning about cancer and lung disease doesn't work, the idea of bad breath, yellow teeth and wrinkled skin may get your teen's attention. And if your teen is into sports, point out that smoking can make him or her less fit.

Be a role model. Set a good example. If you smoke, quit. If you

smoked in the past, talk about it with your teen and explain why it was a bad choice.

Get expert help. Sometimes teens listen better when the advice comes from someone other than a parent. Take your teen to his or her doctor. The doctor can stress the health risks of smoking. Your teen can also get tips for quitting from his or her doctor. If your teen wants to use a skin patch or nicotine gum, be sure to check with the doctor first.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Take a stand against smoking

It's no secret: Smoking causes major health problems over time. Think cancer and heart disease.

But smoking does fast damage too. Get this: Just one cigarette can make you feel dizzy, sick to your stomach and short of breath.

Smoking can also affect your grades. And it can make you feel worse about yourself.

The fact is, turning down tobacco can be tough. That's especially true if you're stressed or are pressured to light up.

But you can take a stand against smoking. These tips can help:

- Don't let anyone convince you that smoking is OK.
- Know the truth. Some movies, TV shows and magazines make it look like smoking is "in." But most teens and adults don't smoke.
- Don't waste your cash on tobacco. Think of the money you'll have for other things you need or want.
- Spend your time hanging out with friends or playing sports, not smoking.

If you need help saying no to smoking, talk to someone you trust. Your doctor or a school counselor may be a good place to start.

Need a reason to stop smoking?

Cancer. Lung disease. Heart disease. Avoiding these should rank high on your list of reasons to quit smoking.

Here are more reasons:

Protect your loved ones from secondhand smoke. Children who breathe secondhand smoke are at risk for asthma, as well as

ear and lung infections.

Improve your senses of taste and smell. **Save money.** Cigarettes cost a lot. **Look nicer.** Quitting smoking will help you have whiter teeth and fresher breath. You might also avoid the wrinkled skin that smoking can cause.

Source: National Cancer Institute



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10 tips for a fit family

Here's a great family project to work on: Get active and fit!

- Being fit can help each of you:
- » Build strong bones and muscles.
- » Ease stress. » Sleep better.
- » Prevent weight gain.

And those are just a few of the benefits. So aim to be a fit family. Here's how to get started:

1. Encourage your kids to be active. And set an example by being active yourself.
2. Schedule family time for exercise at least a few times each week.
3. Turn off the TV, video games and computer more often.
4. Give "active" gifts—a new pair of running shoes, in-line skates or a basketball, for example.
5. Combine exercise with TV time. Challenge your kids to a contest. See who can do the most push-ups,



sit-ups or jumping jacks during a commercial.

6. Celebrate special events with a hike or a game of volleyball.
7. Do household chores together. Try washing and waxing the car by hand, walking the dog, or weeding the garden.
8. Find free places nearby to enjoy,

like the local park or bike trails.

9. When weather is bad, head indoors. Go mall walking. Or try an exercise video.
10. Instead of rewarding your kids with food, find a fun activity. For example, offer to play their favorite outdoor game.

Source: National Association for Sport and Physical Education

Helping your overweight child

When kids weigh too much, they might not feel good about themselves. And being overweight can raise their risk for a number of health problems.

If you think your child is overweight, talk to his or her doctor. If the doctor says your child does need to lose a few pounds, these tips may help:

Make it a family affair. Don't focus on changing the habits of just your overweight child. The whole family can benefit from eating better and being more active.

Be active together. Go bicycling after dinner, for instance.

Plan healthy meals. Serve plenty of fruits and vegetables. And try to cut back on portion sizes and foods high in fat.

Eat together. Kids learn about good nutrition by watching you.

Limit down time. Don't let your kids spend more than two hours each day watching TV or playing computer games.

Above all, make it clear that you love your child no matter how much he or she weighs.

Sources: Institute of Medicine; National Institutes of Health

Healthy snacks

Between-meal snacking isn't a bad thing when it's done right.

Some snacks can actually be good. To make sure your kids snack wisely, keep foods that are good for them in your home. Healthy choices include:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Low-fat cheese.
- Peanut butter on crackers.
- Low-fat yogurt.
- Low-fat pudding.
- Fig bars.
- Whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.

Sources: American Dietetic Association; Baylor College of Medicine

Do you have a problem with anxiety?

When you get scared, your body reacts. Your heart speeds up. Your mind races. These are normal reactions.

But sometimes we get this anxious feeling too often, or at the wrong times.

You may feel worried or scared even when there's no reason.

Signs that you may have an anxiety problem include:

- Trouble sleeping.
- Tense muscles.
- Always feeling nervous or on edge.
- Shortness of breath.
- A pounding heartbeat.

Some people with anxiety problems get panic attacks. You may be having a panic attack if you:

- Feel like you're going to choke.
- Have a very fast pulse.
- Are dizzy.
- Sweat and shake.

Tell your doctor if you think you have panic attacks. Talking about your feelings with a counselor can help. Your doctor also might prescribe medicine.

What you can do

- Focus on what's *really* happening, not on what might happen.
- Exercise regularly. It helps you relax.
- Learn ways to relax, such as deep-breathing exercises.



When your child may need help

We know when children have colds or broken bones.

Problems with their mental health are harder to see. But spotting them is very important.

Treatment can help children with these problems feel better, safer and happier.

Learning the signs

Tell a doctor if your child:

- Seems angry most of the time, cries a lot or often overreacts to things.
- Avoids family and friends, and wants to be alone all the time.
- Loses interest in things he or she usually enjoys.
- Destroys property, breaks the law, or hurts animals or people.
- Is more afraid than normal.
- Starts doing badly in school.

- Has trouble sleeping or sleeps more than usual.
- Eats too much or too little.
- Talks about suicide.

Getting help

You might blame yourself for your child's emotional problems. And you might be embarrassed about getting help.

Don't be.

Such problems have more than one simple cause. They are illnesses that need treatment. The important thing is to focus on

Treatment can help children feel better and happier.

helping your child get well again.

A doctor or school counselor can put you in touch with people who can help.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics; American Psychiatric Association; Federal Center for Mental Health Services