Asthma

What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease that involves the breathing tubes (airways) that allow the air to go in and out of the lungs. Normal airways are wide open so the air can go in and out easily. With asthma the airways are narrow so it is harder for the air to go in and out. Asthma also causes inflammation in the lungs that can cause blockage of the airways.

Asthma is an inherited disease – it runs in families. It is a common disease that affects 1 out of every 10 people. There is no "cure" for asthma. It may be lifelong. The treatment is to understand and avoid your triggers. Triggers are things that are irritating to the lungs and cause asthma symptoms. Medicines are used to control asthma and its symptoms.

Common asthma triggers:

- Allergies (pollen, mold, cockroaches, animal dander, etc.)
- Household products (cleaning solutions, deodorants, perfumes, etc.)
- Dust
- Air pollution (ozone, smog, gasoline fumes, etc.)
- Weather (cold air, temperature change, etc.)
- Exercise
- Infections (colds, viral illnesses)
- Night time
- Smoke
- Emotions

Signs and symptoms of asthma:

- Coughing (especially at night and during exercise)
- Wheezing (a musical whistling sound with breathing)
- Trouble breathing
- Retractions (skin tugging between the ribs)
- Feeling of tightness in the chest

Things to do to help your child’s asthma:

- Follow your child’s Asthma Action Plan. Teach your child and other care givers (teachers, babysitters, school nurses) what to do when your child has problems with his asthma.
- Keep your child away from the things that trigger his asthma.
• Give your child the medicines his doctor has ordered and carefully follow the instructions given.

• Do not allow anyone to smoke around your child.

• Make sure you always have your child’s medicine on hand. Also, remember to send your child’s medicine with him when he is away from home.

• Encourage your child to keep up with normal activities and play.

• Dress your child warmly in cold weather, including a scarf over his nose and mouth.

• Learn all you can about asthma.

• Be sure to get your child an annual "flu shot" each fall. Talk with your child’s doctor about when to do this.

**Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:**

• Your child’s symptoms do not get better with medicine (according to his Asthma Action Plan).

• Your child has any other illnesses, including fever or a cold.

• Your child has new symptoms.

• Your child will not eat or drink.

• Your child’s symptoms keep him awake at night.

• You have questions or concerns about his asthma.

**Call 911 or take your child to the nearest emergency room if:**

• Your child’s lips or fingernails are blue.

• Your child is having a hard time breathing.

• Your child does not feel any better 20 to 30 minutes after taking the extra medicine (according to his Asthma Action Plan).

**Special Instructions:**

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________