All About Asthma

A book about asthma for kids.

Sponsored by an unrestricted educational grant from DEY.
For allergies to animals—
- Do not keep animals that trigger your symptoms in your home. If you do, keep them out of rooms where you spend a lot of time, especially the bedroom.
- Clean your home well and use a HEPA filter to clean the air.

For allergies to cockroaches—
- Frequently take out the trash and don’t leave pet food out.
- Seal openings where cockroaches could enter, seal leaky pipes and dry out your basement.

For allergies to indoor mold—
- Dehumidify your home with air conditioning and/or a room dehumidifier.
- Use a solution of 5% chlorine bleach in water or a cleaning agent with bleach to clean areas where mold grows, such as the shower.

Also, to keep your child healthy make sure he or she regularly takes the medication(s) prescribed by your doctor—even if symptoms are minimal. The best asthma care is care that prevents worsening symptoms.
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AMEAI
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ALLERGY
ASTHMA & IMMUNOLOGY

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“Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!” Tonya let out a long string of coughs and sneezes. Tonya reached for a tissue, but the box fell down.

“Would you pick it up, Mommy? I’m too tired to get out of bed.”

Last night, Tonya spent more hours coughing than sleeping.

“Tonya, I think you need to see the doctor.”

Tonya liked Dr. Burton. He had seen Tonya since she was a baby, and he always had the best pencils.
Honey, Dr. Burton wants you to see a special doctor called an allergist. Her name is Dr. Watkins. She can find out why you cough so much and why your chest hurts.

At night, even when she didn’t have a cold, Tonya’s chest felt heavy.

“Maybe while I’m asleep my stuffed giraffe falls on me,” she imagined. Tonya’s best friend, Angela, had given her the giraffe.
Angela had invited Tonya to her ice-skating party. Tonya really hoped she would be well enough to go.

Tonya had missed Megan’s bowling party. She had missed trick-or-treating, too.

“Being sick and missing out on fun makes you sad, doesn’t it?” Tonya’s mother asked.

Tonya nodded her head and took another tissue. This time she used it for her eyes, not her nose.
Dr. Watkins, the allergist, turned out to be as nice as Dr. Burton. “I want to find out more about your airways and how they’re moving air in and out,” she said.

Dr. Watkins listened to Tonya’s chest. She said, “I’m going to ask you to breathe into this hose. It’s connected to a machine called a spirometer, which can tell us things about your breathing that we can’t see.”

Tonya breathed into the hose and watched the screen. It was like TV, but it showed her breathing!
“Tonya, you have asthma,” said Dr. Watkins.
“Asthma is a condition that makes it hard for you to breathe. Asthma is what is making you cough a lot at night, and it makes your chest hurt and feel tight,” she told Tonya. “You didn’t do anything wrong to get asthma— lots of kids have it. But we can help you feel much better.”

“We all have a job to do. First, my job is to find out what triggers your asthma.”

Dr. Watkins told Tonya that the nurse would scratch Tonya’s arm with tiny needles. “They’ll feel like tiny itches, not shots,” Dr. Watkins assured Tonya. “And after the nurse finishes, you can pick out a dinosaur pencil.”

After the test, Dr. Watkins said, “Well, Tonya, I can tell by looking at the bumps on your arms that lots of things trigger your asthma. Some things in the air are causing problems when you breathe them in. They probably make you sneeze, too.”
These things are called allergens. So, I have another job—to give you allergy medicine that protects you against allergens.”

“You have some jobs, too, Tonya. First, you need to carry and use an inhaler. The nurse will show you how to use it. You’re a smart girl, so you’ll learn fast. Then you can use it all by yourself.”
An inhaler holds medicine that will help you breathe better and feel well. Your chest won’t hurt as much or so often. You won’t cough as much, either. Remember, you need to keep it with you, all the time.”

“I can carry it in my backpack,” Tonya said. “Right,” Dr. Watkins said.

“Your parents’ job is to help you think of ways to make sure you have it with you all the time. And they can help get rid of allergens in your house by cleaning and taking other measures.”
Another of your jobs is to stay away from dogs. You’re allergic to them, so they make it hard for you to breathe.”

Dr. Watkins showed Tonya a peak flow meter. “This looks like a kazoo, doesn’t it, Tonya? You can use this every day to see how well you are breathing. The nurse will teach you how.”
At home, your parents can help you use it and chart your readings. To keep Tonya well, we all have jobs to do,” Dr. Watkins said. “But we don’t need prizes for doing our jobs right. All we need is a healthy girl.”
For more asthma information for kids, visit the Kids’ Page on www.aaaai.org.
(There’s lots of information for parents, too.)