



# Patient education: Asthma and pregnancy (The Basics)

[Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate](#)

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## What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung condition that can make it hard to breathe. It can also cause wheezing (noisy breathing), coughing, or a tight feeling in the chest.

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## Do asthma symptoms change during pregnancy?

Sometimes. During pregnancy, a woman's asthma symptoms can get better, worse, or stay the same.

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## How is asthma treated?

Asthma is treated with different types of medicines. These can be inhalers, liquids, or pills. Asthma medicines work in different ways. They can:

- Stop symptoms quickly
- Control symptoms over time and prevent future symptoms

Your doctor will work with you to make an asthma action plan. This is a list of instructions that tells you which medicines to take and when to take them. It also tells you when to get help or call for an ambulance (in the US and Canada, dial 9-1-1) for your asthma.

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## Are asthma medicines safe to take during pregnancy?

Yes. Most asthma medicines are safe to take during pregnancy. If your asthma medicines are not safe to take during pregnancy, your doctor will change them.

It's important to take all the asthma medicines your doctor prescribes to keep your asthma well-controlled. If you skip your asthma medicines, you are more likely to have an asthma flare or attack. Asthma flares can lead to serious health problems for you and your baby.

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## **Which doctors and nurses will take care of me during pregnancy?**

You might need a few different doctors and nurses to take care of you during pregnancy. Usually, 1 doctor will take care of your pregnancy. He or she might also be able to take care of your asthma. If not, you will see another doctor who can take care of your asthma.

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## **Will I have tests during pregnancy?**

Yes. Your doctor or nurse will probably do a breathing test to check how your lungs are working. He or she might also recommend that you use a "peak flow meter" at home. A peak flow meter is a device that you breathe into that can show how well your lungs are working.

Your doctor will also do different tests to check your baby's health. These include blood tests and an imaging test called an ultrasound. Imaging tests create pictures of the inside of the body.

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## **What else can I do to prevent asthma symptoms during pregnancy?**

To help prevent asthma symptoms, you can:

- Avoid your asthma triggers – Triggers are things that cause asthma symptoms or make symptoms worse. Common triggers are dust, mold, dogs, cats, pollen, and cigarette smoke.
  - Avoid smoking – If you smoke, it's very important to try to quit. Your doctor or nurse can help you if you are having a hard time stopping. Also, avoid being near people who smoke.
  - Get a flu shot – A flu shot can help keep you from getting the flu. Getting the flu can cause asthma symptoms to get worse.
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## **Will my baby be healthy?**

If your asthma is well-controlled during pregnancy, chances are good that your asthma will not hurt your baby.

## Can I breastfeed if I have asthma?

The answer is almost always "yes." If you plan to breastfeed your baby, let your doctor or nurse know. He or she will make sure that your asthma medicines are safe to take if you breastfeed.

Breastfeeding does not fully prevent asthma in children. But babies who breastfeed have a lower chance of having episodes of wheezing during their first 2 years.

### More on this topic

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[Patient education: How to use your metered dose inhaler \(adults\) \(The Basics\)](#)

[Patient education: How to use your dry powder inhaler \(adults\) \(The Basics\)](#)

[Patient education: Avoiding asthma triggers \(The Basics\)](#)

[Patient education: Medicines for asthma \(The Basics\)](#)

[Patient education: Asthma and pregnancy \(Beyond the Basics\)](#)

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