



# Kids with Asthma Can!

AN ACTIVITY BOOKLET FOR PARENTS AND KIDS



Kids with asthma can be healthy and active, just like me! Look inside for a story, activity, and tips.

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Children's Hospital Boston





## Dear Parents and Friends,

These days, almost everybody knows a child who has asthma. On the PBS television show ARTHUR, even Arthur knows someone with asthma. It's his best friend Buster!

We are committed to helping Boston families get the asthma care they need. More and more children in Boston these days have asthma. For many reasons, children in cities are at extra risk of asthma problems. The good news is that it can be kept under control. And when that happens, children with asthma can do all the things they like to do.

It just takes good asthma management. This means being under a doctor's care and taking daily medicine to prevent asthma symptoms from starting. Children with asthma can also take quick relief medicine when asthma symptoms begin.

Staying active to build strong lungs is a part of good asthma management. Avoiding dust, tobacco smoke, car fumes, and other things that can start an asthma attack is important too.

We hope this booklet can help the children you love stay active with asthma.

Sincerely,



Children's Hospital Boston



BOSTON  
CHILDREN'S  
MUSEUM



Watch  
ARTHUR® on  
PBS KIDS  
GO!



# Buster's Breathless

Adapted from the ARTHUR PBS Series

A  
Read-Aloud  
Story for  
Parents and  
Kids

**B**uster and Arthur are in the tree house, reading some dusty old joke books they found in Arthur's basement.

"Hey, Arthur," says Buster. "What did the banana say to the hippo?"

"What?" says Arthur.

"Nothing," laughs Buster. "Bananas don't talk."

The boys laugh and laugh. Then Buster starts to cough. He coughs and coughs.

"Buster, are you OK?" asks Arthur.

"Can't...catch...  
my breath,"  
coughs Buster.



## Did you know?

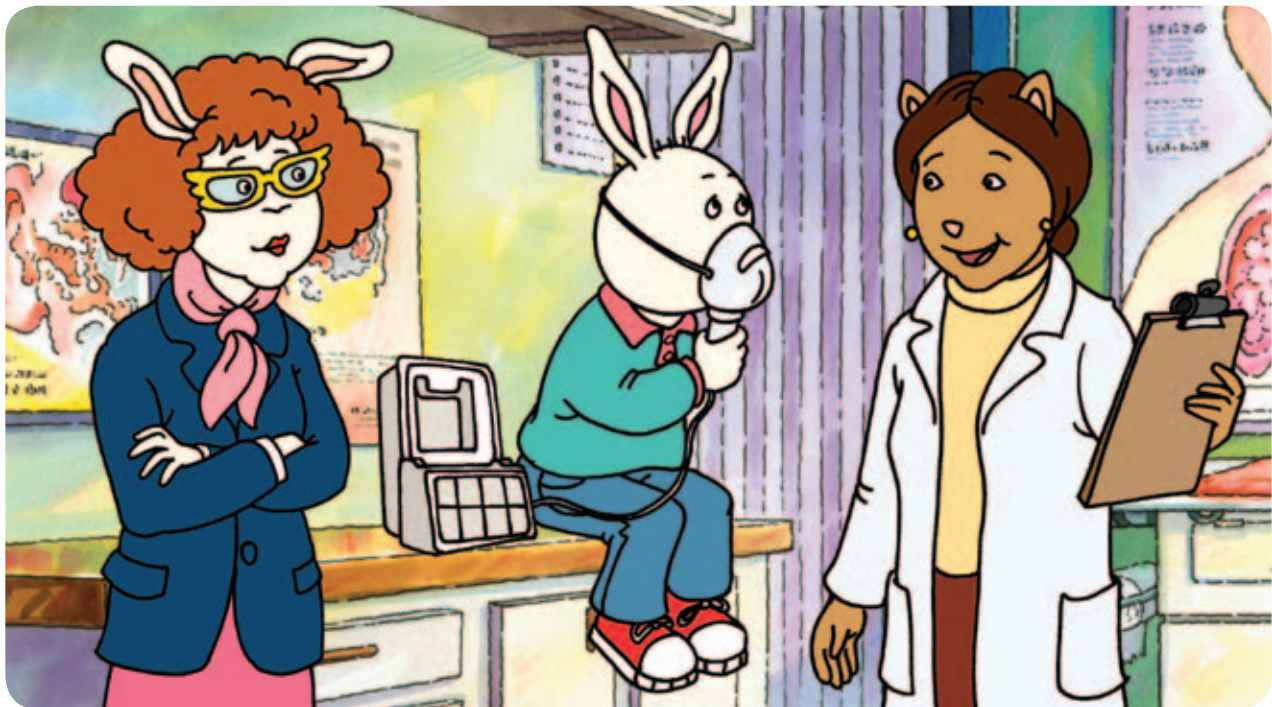
- Asthma is the most common disease among children.
- Asthma is one of the most common reasons children are taken to the emergency room.

**B**uster's mom comes and takes him to the doctor. The doctor gives Buster some medicine using a machine called a nebulizer. It helps him breathe more easily. She shows him how to breathe in his medicine using a pump called an inhaler. She also tells him to take his medicine every day before he goes to school and before he goes to bed.

“The dust and mold from the old joke books made it hard for you to breathe because you have asthma, Buster,” the doctor explains.

“Does that mean I can't read books anymore? Or tell jokes?” asks Buster.

“Don't worry,” says the doctor. “If you take your medicine and stay away from dust, mold, and other things that make your asthma worse, you can do all the things you like to do. You can tell jokes, play ball, eat pizza, and ride bikes.”





A few days later, Buster asks his mom, “When am I going to be cured of asthma?”

“There isn’t a cure for asthma yet,” answers his mom. “But as long as you take your medicine and we stay away from the things that make your asthma worse, you can do all the things you like to do.”

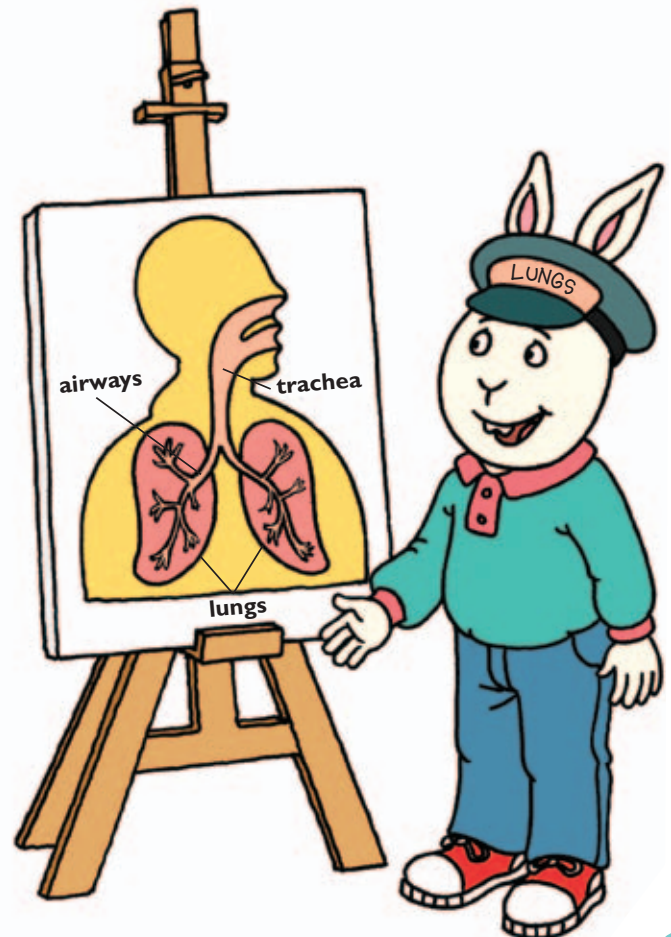
“Yeah, but my friends are acting weird,” says Buster. “Arthur and Binky keep dusting off my books, my desk, even my food. And Francine says that I might have to go to a different school—one that’s just for sick kids.”

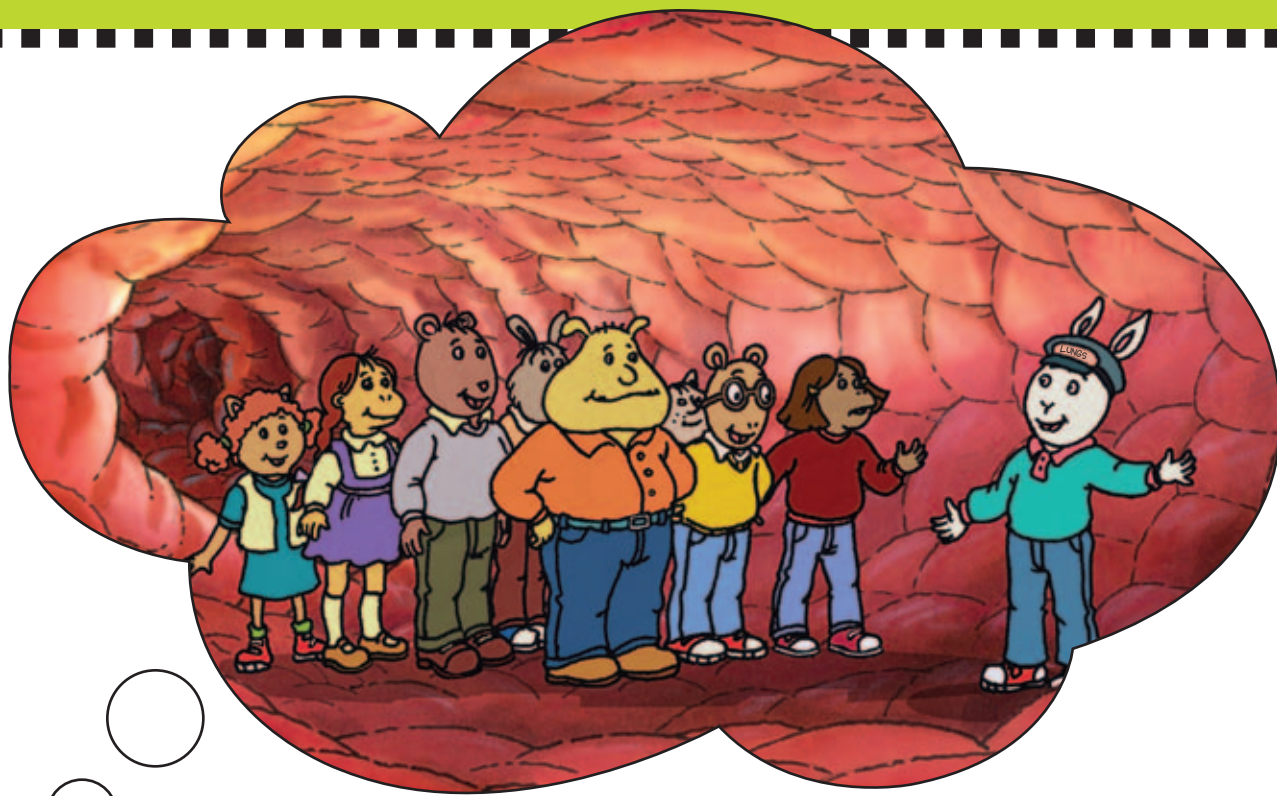
“You know,” says Buster’s mom. “I think your friends don’t understand what asthma is. Maybe you can teach them.”

“That gives me an idea for my science project,” says Buster.

In school the next day Buster presents his science project.

“Today I am taking you on a field trip to my lungs,” says Buster. “But first imagine that you are very small. Close your eyes and concentrate. Now shrink! Pretend I breathe you up and you’re going down into my lungs.”





**W**elcome to my lungs,” says Buster. “At the moment, everything is calm. But if I breathe in something that bothers my lungs, like mold or smoke, it might trigger my asthma. If that happens, the walls of my airways begin to close in. And the muscles around them tighten up. Can you feel the walls shaking around us?”

“I’m imagining it right now,” says Arthur.

“Next my body produces a thick mucus that makes it even harder to breathe and that’s when I begin to cough,” says Buster. “That’s why I keep my inhaler with me. Once I breathe in my medicine and get away from what is making my asthma worse, I will start to feel better. Now open your eyes, the imaginary field trip is over!”

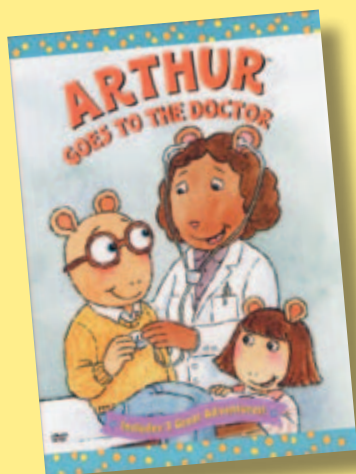
“**W**ow, Buster. That was cool!” says Arthur. “It felt like we were really there.”

“Thanks!” says Buster.

“Any questions?”

“Are you trying to tell us something?” asks Binky.

“Yes,” says Buster. “I have asthma. But as long as I take my medicine, we can do the same stuff together like we always have. I’m still the same old Buster!”



## Watch ARTHUR!

### **Buster's Breathless**

Will Buster's friends ever treat him the same after they learn that he has asthma? Watch the episode "Buster's Breathless" to find out. It is included on the home video *Arthur Goes to the Doctor*. You can find this at your local library or video store. After watching "Buster's Breathless," stay tuned for "A Word from Dr. Griffith." This is a short documentary about two active, healthy boys with asthma who visit their doctor.

# Tips for Parents: Asthma

**A**sthma is very common in children today. Most children with asthma also have allergies, which can trigger their asthma. There is no cure for asthma, but with proper care and the right medicine, children with asthma can lead active, healthy lives. In fact, running, playing, and doing sports are good for children with asthma. These activities can help them build up their lungs and stay strong against asthma attacks.



1

## What is asthma?

- Asthma is a chronic illness. It can be controlled but not cured.
- The symptoms of asthma are coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.
- An asthma attack can be started by small particles such as dust that are breathed into the lungs and cause a reaction. Allergy particles such as pollen also can cause an asthma attack.
- In an asthma attack, the walls of the airways inside the lungs swell up. The muscles surrounding these airways become tight. Also, the lungs get clogged by thick mucus. The airways become narrow, so less air can flow through them. This is what makes it hard to breathe.

2

## What can trigger asthma?

- An allergy (a sensitive reaction to something) can trigger asthma. Many children are allergic to:
  - dust mites (very tiny insects)
  - furry or feathered pets
  - mold, mildew, or pollen
  - rodents or cockroaches
- Tiny particles floating in the air can cause asthma, too, such as:
  - smoke from cigarettes and cigars
  - cleaning products, perfume, or other strong smells
  - air pollution such as fumes from cars
- Other things that can trigger asthma are:
  - weather changes
  - exercise
  - colds

3

## How is asthma treated?

- Children with asthma need to take the right medicines and stay away from things that make their asthma worse.
- Many children with asthma take a daily medicine to control their asthma.
- Children can also use special “quick relief” medicines when an attack is starting or likely to occur.
- Many asthma medicines come in the form of a spray dispensed by a pump, called an inhaler. A spacer device comes with the inhaler. The spacer should always be used, because it helps the medicine go directly to the lungs.
- Doctors often fill out asthma action plans that outline the steps a family needs to take every day to avoid asthma attacks.
- Although exercise is good for kids with asthma, it can sometimes trigger asthma attacks. That’s why some children take medicine before they go out to play, especially in cold weather.



## PARENTS’ CORNER

*“Find out your child’s biggest trigger and try to get rid of it. My old apartment had wall-to-wall rugs. When I moved to a tile-floored apartment my daughter didn’t have any more asthma attacks.” — Bridget H. (parent of a child with asthma)*

*“My best advice for a parent who has just found out a child has asthma is change the sheets, cover up the mattress, take out the rug, stop using aerosol sprays. If you smoke, try to do it outside. Clean with natural products like vinegar or baking soda.” — Doris C. (parent of a child with asthma)*

*“A lot of people go to the doctor’s and they have an asthma action plan but they tuck it away somewhere. It should be posted around the house, at school, at church, wherever your children spend a lot of time. It’s so important.” — Mary W. (parent of three children with asthma)*

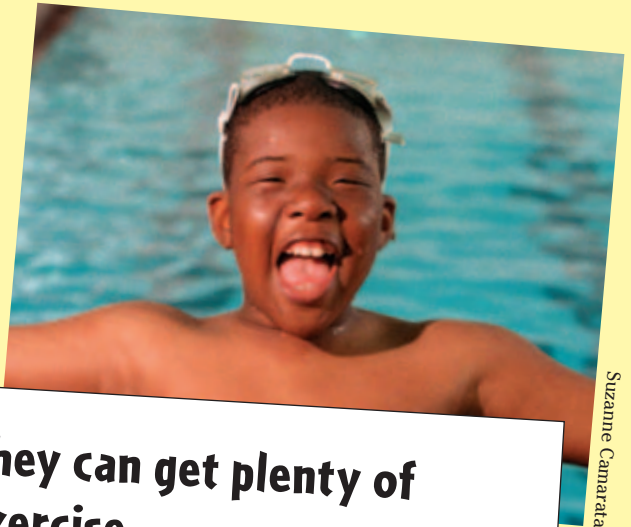
Across the country, children miss 14 million school days a year because of asthma!



# Kids with Asthma Can!

## They can manage their asthma every day.

- Children can stay away from things that bother their lungs. And they can take their daily medicine.
- They can learn when to take quick relief medicine and when not to.
- When their asthma is under control children will feel better. They will miss fewer school days. And they will avoid trips to the emergency room.



Suzanne Camarata

## They can get plenty of exercise.

- Everyone needs to stay active—and that includes children with asthma!
- Staying active makes lungs stronger. With stronger lungs, a child is less likely to have an asthma attack.
- Children who have their asthma under control can take part freely in games and sports.
- Children with asthma should always carry quick relief medicine. This is medicine they can use right before they get active, or if they get out of breath while playing.
- Children with asthma do best with activities that include a warm-up, a cool down, and short rest periods so they can catch their breath.
- Swimming, baseball, softball, football, and dancing are some asthma-friendly activities.
- Talk with a doctor or nurse about the asthma-friendly games and sports that might be best for your child.



# Talk About Asthma Triggers

It's important to know what to stay away from when you have asthma. Buster knows that some things will start up his asthma. They are called triggers. He knows other things will help his lungs stay strong and keep his body healthy.

## Things that Buster should stay away from:



car with exhaust



dusty books



cockroaches



chalk dust



cigarette smoke



Nemo the cat

Do you have any of these things in your house or in your neighborhood?

Yes No

How can you stay away from these things?

## Things that are safe or helpful for Buster:



asthma action plan



inhaler



fish in a bowl



toy truck



playing baseball



toy blocks



mop and vacuum



riding a bike

Do you have any of these things in your house or in your neighborhood?

Yes No

How can these things help you?

# Buster's Asthma Game



**toy blocks**



**car with exhaust**



**asthma action plan**



## Instructions

1. Look at each picture.
2. Decide if it is something that is healthy for Buster or might start up his asthma.
3. If the picture shows something that is healthy, draw a line from it to the picture of Buster smiling.
4. If the picture shows something that might start up Buster's asthma, draw a line from it to the picture of Buster coughing.



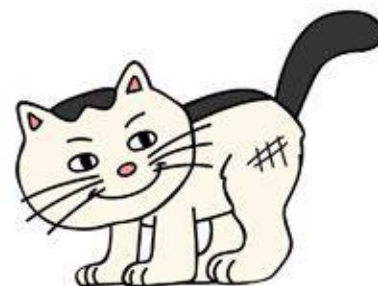
These are the things that are **SAFE** or will **HELP ME STAY STRONG** against asthma.



**dusty books**



**mop and vacuum**



**Nemo the cat**



**inhaler**



**cigarette smoke**



**toy truck**

These are the things that I need to **STAY AWAY FROM** so they don't start up my asthma.



**playing baseball**



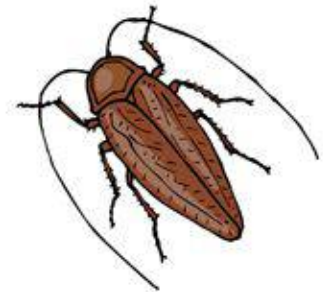
**fish in a bowl**



**chalk**



**riding a bike**



**cockroaches**

# All About Asthma

by Buster

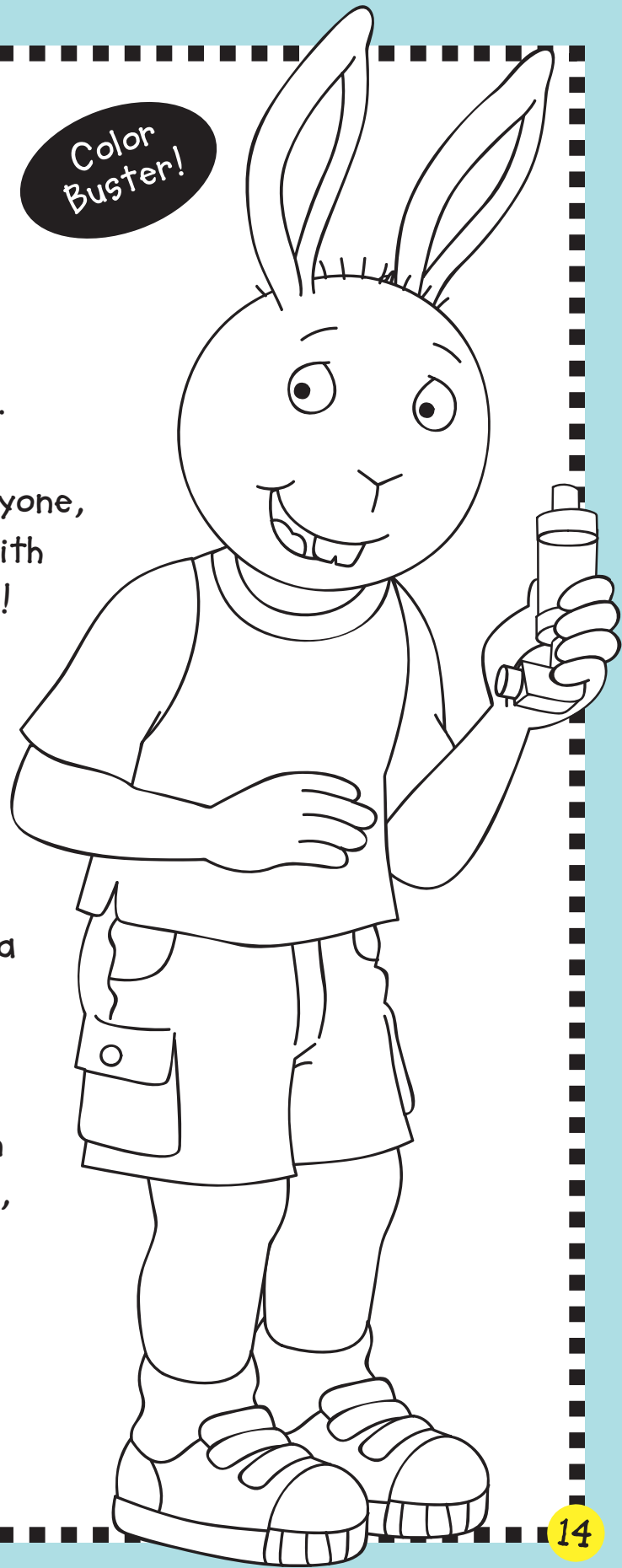
Color  
Buster!

**1** I have asthma. Sometimes the airways in my lungs swell up, and it's hard for me to breathe.

**2** You can't catch asthma from anyone, so it's perfectly safe to play with me. I'm still the same old Buster!

**3** Certain things, like dust, make my asthma act up. Other things, like cigarette smoke and pet hair, can also cause asthma attacks. It's important to know what makes your asthma worse and stay away from those things.

**4** Even though I have asthma I can still do all the regular kid stuff, like play soccer, eat pizza, and hang out with my friends. I just need to take my medicine and follow my doctor's directions.



# Asthma Resources

## Booklist for Children

***ABC's of Asthma* by Kim Gosselin. Jayjo Books, 1998.**

This alphabet book matches each letter of the alphabet with corresponding words that are associated with asthma.

***Asthma* by Sharon Gordon. Children's Press, 2003.**

A part of the Rookie Read About Health series, this book is for readers as young as five. With many photographs, Gordon clearly explains what triggers asthma, and introduces new words, such as "inhaler" and "airways."

***Asthma* by Dr. Alvin Silverstein, et al. Franklin Watts, 2003.**

Silverstein's book is full of interesting facts explained in an engaging manner. There are "Did You Know?" bubbles on many pages and even experiments for kids to try to help them understand how asthma feels.

***Brianna Breathes Easy: A Story About Asthma* by Virginia Kroll. Illustrations by Jayoung Cho. Albert Whitman & Company, 2005.**

Brianna learns ways to control her asthma and breathe easy so she can star in her school play. Through Brianna's eyes, kids will learn all about asthma attacks and what triggers them.

***The Lion Who Had Asthma* by Jonathan London. Illustrations by Nadine Bernard Westcott. Albert Whitman & Company, 1992.**

Sean's nebulizer mask and his imagination aid in his recovery following an asthma attack.

***Taking Asthma to School* by Kim Gosselin. Jayjo Books, 1998.**

A young boy describes what it is like to have asthma, what happens during an asthma attack, and how his asthma can be treated and controlled.

## Kid-friendly Web sites about Asthma

**Quest for the Code**  
[asthma.starlightprograms.org](http://asthma.starlightprograms.org)

A fun and engaging online game (featuring Cuba Gooding, Jr. and Diane Sawyer) where kids are asked to save the earth from dangerous asthma-inducing aliens. You can also request a free CD-ROM of the game.

**AsthmaBusters**  
[www.asthmabusters.org](http://www.asthmabusters.org)

This site (currently under construction) is sponsored by the American Lung Association. It features an online club for kids with asthma.

**NoAttacks.org**  
[www.noattacks/forkids.html](http://www.noattacks/forkids.html)

This site includes a downloadable book with puzzles, games and coloring pages. It can also be read in Spanish. A fun way to learn about triggers.

**AsthmaKids.ca**  
[www.asthma-kids.ca](http://www.asthma-kids.ca)

Looking for a way to hear about other kids' experiences with asthma? Check out the blog on this website. In addition to a great online game and health information, this website allows kids to reach out to other kids dealing with asthma. Requires flash.

**ARTHUR's Hooray for Health!**  
[pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/health](http://pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/health)  
This site offers downloadable family activities, games, and tips on staying healthy with asthma. Select Hooray for Health! and then All About Asthma.





Visit the Arthur  
Web site at  
[pbskidsgo.org/arthur](http://pbskidsgo.org/arthur)

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