

Shortness of Breath, Pediatric

Shortness of breath means that your child is having trouble breathing. Having shortness of breath may mean that your child has a medical problem that needs treatment. Your child should get medical care right away for shortness of breath.

Follow these instructions at home:

Pay attention to any changes in your child's symptoms. Take these actions to help with your child's condition:

Medicines

- Give over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your child's health care provider. This includes oxygen and any inhaled medicines.
- If your child was prescribed an antibiotic, have him or her take it as told by your child's health care provider. **Do not** stop giving your child the antibiotic even if your child starts to feel better.

Pollutants

- **Do not** allow your child to smoke or to use e-cigarettes. Talk to your child about the risks of inhaling nicotine or vapor.
- Have your child avoid exposure to smoke. This includes campfire smoke, forest fire smoke, and secondhand smoke from tobacco products. **Do not** smoke or allow others to smoke in your home or around your child.
- Keep your child away from things that can irritate his or her airways and make it more difficult to breathe, such as:
 - Mold.
 - Dust.
 - Air pollution.
 - Chemical fumes.
 - Things that can cause allergy symptoms (*allergens*), if your child has allergies. Common allergens include pollen from grasses or trees and animal dander.



General instructions

- Have your child rest as needed. Allow him or her to slowly return to normal activities as told by your child's health care provider. This includes any exercise that has been approved by your child's health care provider.
- Keep all follow-up visits as told by your child's health care provider. This is important.

Contact a health care provider if your child:

- Does not get better.
- Is less active than usual because of shortness of breath.
- Has new symptoms.

Get help right away if your child:

- Gets worse.
- Has shortness of breath while at rest.

- Feels light-headed or faint.
- Develops a cough that is not controlled with medicines.
- Coughs up blood.
- Has pain with breathing.
- Has a fever.
- Cannot walk up stairs or exercise normally because of shortness of breath.

Summary

- Shortness of breath means that your child is having trouble breathing.
- Having shortness of breath may mean that your child has a medical problem that needs treatment.
- Your child should get medical care right away for shortness of breath.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.