

ASTHMA RELAXATION AND BREATHING EXERCISES

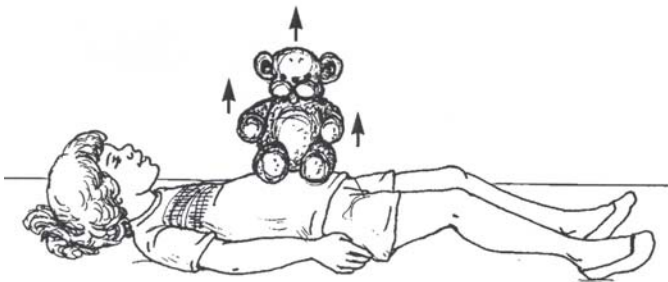
An asthma episode can make your child fearful, nervous, and angry. These emotions are normal, but they also make breathing more difficult. During an episode, other things happen to make breathing difficult. Air becomes trapped in the tiny air sacs at the end of the airways. This trapped air becomes stale and cannot get out. New, fresh air cannot get in. At the same time, mucus and swelling make the airways narrower.

Special relaxation and breathing exercises can help a child relax, breathe in and out more easily, and move the trapped air out of the air sacs. The fresh air can then get into the lungs.

HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD

Help your child learn the following exercises one at a time. Later, help him or her to do all of them together. Practice these exercises with your child when he is not having an episode. In this way, your child will be ready to use them as soon as an episode starts.

1. Teach your child to relax. Relaxing makes breathing easier. Have your child lie on the floor. Play some relaxing music. Help your child to tighten every part of his body, one part at a time. Each time he tightens one part, he should hold it tight for five seconds and then let go.
2. Help your child learn to breathe in through his nose. The nose warms, moistens, and cleans the air. A small child can be taught this by having him pretend he is smelling a flower or a food that has a good smell.
3. Teach your child to use "belly breathing." Belly breathing gives the lungs more room for air to come in. Have your child lie on the floor. Place a doll or favorite stuffed toy on his belly. As he breathes in, have him make his belly (instead of his chest) rise up (Picture 1).
4. Teach your child to breathe out slowly through the mouth using pursed lips. This lets trapped air get out of the air sacs. Teach him to do it slowly. A child can be taught to do this by having him blow large "play" bubbles. Blowing on a pinwheel to make it go around also teaches pursed lip breathing (Picture 2).



Picture 1 Teach your child to practice "belly breathing."



Picture 2 Teach you child to breathe out slowly.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have taught your child these steps, show him how to put it all together.

- Put on relaxing music.
- Tighten and relax all parts of the body, one at a time.
- Breathe in through the nose.
- Make the belly rise, not the chest.
- Breathe out slowly through pursed lips.

Continue to do the exercises for a few minutes or until the episode has passed.

These exercises can be done anytime and anywhere. The more often your child practices the exercises, the better he will be at doing them. If he cannot play music, he can think of something else that relaxes him while doing the exercises.

These exercises are just one way to help your child during an asthma episode. Remember that removing triggers, drinking liquids, taking prescribed medicines, and keeping in touch with the doctor are also important.

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.