

# Asthma Insider

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## Secondhand Smoke is no Joke

pg 4



**2** Your  
Inhaler

**5** Why Keep  
Tracking?

**6** Cleaning  
Tips

**7** Summer  
Plans?

# How Does Your Inhaler Measure Up?

Having asthma in the home is as common as having a vacuum cleaner. Do you ever notice that the more you run a vacuum cleaner, the more quickly it wears out? After a while it starts coughing up dust and it has a hard time sucking things up into its air intake valve. Maybe our vacuum cleaner has asthma, too! All kidding aside, asthma is no joke and when it hits, you can't afford to wait around for the punch-line—it's

nothing to laugh about.

When an asthma attack occurs, what do you do? Do you call the ambulance, load up the car and drive to

the local hospital, or grab your trusty inhaler? Asthma goes back for centuries, and though the first form of an inhaler appeared in 1778, it wasn't until 1957 when the first modern inhaler—a portable pocket size—was invented. As time went on, more inhalers were invented and different medications went into them. Some were given the name "rescue" inhalers because they contained salbutamol, a fast-acting drug which Ventolin falls under. Then there are the "preventive" inhalers that help you manage your asthma. These inhalers contain steroids and nedocromil, which include medications like Pro-Air and Budesonide. But with every medical resource comes a medical side effect. Let's see how this "fresh air in a bottle" can actually take our breath away with its side effects.

Whether you use Ventolin, Pro-Air, Proventil, Alupent, or any other inhaler, you can be assured that some of the medicine it contains may come

with an allergic reaction. CFC inhalers such as Alupent or the ever-so-popular over-the-counter Primatene mist had the capability to deplete the ozone layer. These inhalers were eventually removed from the shelves and out of doctor's offices. Most doctors now use HFA inhalers. Some, like Xopenex, carry fewer side effects, but like the others, they may come with some side effects like headaches, nausea, runny nose, or even muscle pains. While common, Ventolin can cause dry mouth, which may accompany thrush or hoarseness in the throat, affecting the voice. It is best

## When an asthma attack occurs, what do you do?

to rinse after every use. These inhalers can also cause shakiness due to an

accelerated heartbeat. Sudden movements of the hands and feet can also be symptoms of

side effects occurring in your body. Other side effects that may occur but are very rare include sudden coughing attacks, anxiety, agitation, or even restlessness. Pro-Air is one of the only inhalers that can last up to two years and doesn't require priming when dropped or not used for some time. But because Pro-Air uses a solvent called ethanol, which isn't found in Ventolin or Proventil, it can also cause dizziness or insomnia. Pro-Air may also cause hives or redness of the skin, and some patients that were switched to this inhaler complained of tightening of the chest followed by additional wheezing. In its defense, it is considered a managing or maintenance medication.

Many people prefer Ventolin over Pro-Air because Pro-Air uses ethanol, but they also claim that Pro-Air constricts their airways and doesn't help their breathing issues. Even though there is a substantial price

*cont. on page 3*

## Your Inhaler CONT.

difference between the two, Ventolin being the more expensive, many patients still opt to pass on Pro-Air to get the sudden relief they require. However, some asthmatics prefer Pro-Air over Proventil because of its managing capabilities, so they don't become dependent on the rescue inhaler in the long run. Pro-Air is more like the asthma tracker of medicine—it acts to keep asthma under control.

Side effects or not, inhalers are something we use because it's worth it to help us breathe a little easier. With technology making new and improved medications and programs to aid in controlling asthma, such as the eAsthma Tracker, asthma can become easy to manage and even preventable.

Well, I'm out of breath after this speech, but don't be afraid to visit, like, and read our Facebook page. We would love to hear your ideas and opinions. Come in, stay a while, and give us your take on which inhaler you prefer to use and any side effects you experience. Does Pro Air, Ventolin or Proventil work for you? What do you use and why?

You'll also find interesting facts from doctors, videos, articles, and a few asthma poems, and you'll meet others who know what you're going through. So look us up on Facebook and share some of your thoughts and advice on how we can help ourselves and our children breathe a little easier.

*By Stacey Riding*

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# Secondhand Smoke

Since having a son with severe asthma, I have become keenly aware of secondhand smoke. Before, I may not have noticed as I walked past someone smoking a cigarette or puffing on an e-hookah as I strolled through a parking lot to my car. Now I find myself ushering my little guy along and making an effort to avoid places where we might encounter smoke.

By now, most of us know there are plenty of reasons not to light up, but those with asthma have even more reason to avoid smoking. Not only does it worsen or trigger asthma symptoms, smoking can make it much harder to control asthma.

Perhaps most vulnerable to smoke are those who get it secondhand—from their parents, relatives, or even strangers. **According to the American Lung Association, exposure to secondhand smoke causes more than 202,000 asthma flare-ups in children each year.** Children without asthma suffer, too—secondhand smoke is responsible for hundreds of thousands of lower respiratory and ear infections each year. In fact, otherwise healthy kids who are exposed to smoke from ten cigarettes per day are at risk of developing asthma.

The dangers of secondhand smoke are well documented. Children with asthma who live in a household with a smoker may:

- Have more frequent asthma flare-ups
- Be more likely to end up in the emergency room for their asthma
- Miss school more often due to asthma
- Need more asthma medicine to control their symptoms
- Not be able to control their asthma, even with medicine
- Be more prone to bronchitis or pneumonia

If you are a regular smoker, smoke socially, or even use e-cigarettes or hookah, and your child has asthma, one of the most important steps you can take to help him or her is to quit smoking. Any type of smoke can trigger an asthma attack. Encourage relatives or anyone your child spends time with to quit the habit or stay smoke-free around your child. Kids who touch, play on, or breathe near surfaces contaminated with cigarette smoke can develop breathing problems from “thirdhand” smoke, says KidsHealth.org.

So if you are ready to quit, or if you need help educating family members about the dangers of secondhand smoke, don’t wait. Most insurance plans offer free smoking cessation programs, and lots of support is free. Use these resources to learn more.

*By Jordan Gaddis*

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## RESOURCES

Call the Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [tobaccofreeutah.org](http://tobaccofreeutah.org).

Call the American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNGUSA or visit [lung.org](http://lung.org).

Call your insurance company and ask about the smoking cessation program.

# WHY KEEP TRACKING?

What if you didn't get a ticket for not wearing your seat belt? You could just get in your car and go, arrive at your destination without trying to escape some kind of confinement. What would be your motivation to wear it? Believe it or not, asthma has claimed more lives than car accidents, especially in children. And like the seat belt, the eAsthma tracker system is something that should still be used; the incentive is staying a step ahead and protecting your child and yourself.

An attack can happen at any time if you don't control it. Who wants to speed to the hospital when it happens? The

eAsthma tracker program is something even doctors practice, they share the information with their patients and the patients apply it to their children.

So what are parents saying about the tool? Well, Michelle, a parent in Utah says, "The tracker helps me manage my sons' medication. Tracking the symptoms helps me know whether or not they need to go up or down on their medication. I currently have a son who has been able to go off of his medication and I have loved having the tracker to be able to record and see the patterns that let me know how he is doing on that medication change. In the past the tracker helped me see how my other son actually needed to go up on his medication dose."

The eAsthma tracker is more than just reading material—another parent using this knowledge to her advantage is Andrea: "I use the eAsthma

Tracker because it helps me see patterns in my graph (am I worse in Spring? Summer? Fall?) It also helps me track what my triggers are. For my teenager, it helps her because she sees that she's really not in control. It helps our asthma specialist see patterns and how often she is in her yellow or red zone. That helps the specialist know how to adjust her medicine."

Wouldn't it be great to know when to adjust your child's meds, what triggers to stay away from, or what signs to look for to ensure they stay in the

green zone?

With school being out, who wants to stop their

kids from having fun or putting restrictions

on the games they play?

"The tracker helps me manage my son's medications"

Tracking their asthma can let you know what limitations to the extracurricular activities that you and your child enjoy. No one can truly beat asthma, but we can keep up and keep track and that's what we need to do. Take it from me, I have two chronic asthmatics in my home. One is my 8 year old who can't just come up and tell me what's wrong, but with the tracker I use, he doesn't need to tell me because I'm already ahead of it. I love using the tracker because now we haven't seen the inside of an emergency room for so long, I forgot what it looks like.

It's so important to keep using the tracker instead of getting lost, asking yourself if we're out of the woods yet. Take a piece of this knowledge and in return it'll give you a piece of mind.

*By Stacey Riding*

# Cleaning Tips to Protect Your Lungs

My Mom used to joke that her floors were so clean, you could eat off them. It's silly, but as it turns out, you do breathe off them—that's right, the dust and grime on your floors can end up in your lungs. And when your child has asthma, it's even more important to make sure that the air in your home is clean.

Here are seven ways to improve the air quality in your home:

1. Grab a dust rag. Don't underestimate the important of keeping things clean. Sweep and mop floors, wipe down frequently used surfaces, and dust everything—don't overlook bookshelves, electronics, and plants. Avoid scented
2. Start the washer. Toss bedding—sheets and pillow cases—in the washer weekly, and use hot water (higher than 130F).
3. Send that stuffed penguin to the arctic. If your child's stuffed animals aren't washable, seal them in a plastic bag and freeze them for five hours or overnight. This will kill any dust mites that could worsen allergies.
4. Freshen your filter. Not only does changing your home's air filter improve the quality of the air you breathe, it lowers your air conditioner's energy consumption by 5 to 10 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Dirty air filters restrict air flow, causing your system to work harder: Imagine what it does to your lungs!
5. Bathe your bathroom. You go there to get clean, and it should be as clean as you are! Go beyond the basics: Check shower curtains and bath mats for mold, look for sneaky leaks under the sink, and toss old toiletries.
6. Look down at your feet. Chances are, at least part of your home is carpeted, and more than your feet comes in contact with that soft floor. Even if you vacuum regularly, dirt and dust accumulate in the fibers of your carpet. Banish the buildup by steam cleaning your carpet, and remember not to get things too wet—leftover moisture can be troublesome, too.
7. Find the exits. They're more than an evacuation route! If the pathways out of your home are covered in dirt, dust, leaves, or even bugs, those materials will find their way into your home and into your lungs. Taking some time to clear away debris from porches and patios will save you time cleaning inside.

*By Jordan Gaddis*

# Summer Plans?

## DON'T FORGET YOUR INHALER!

Tired of the weather? Thinking of relocating to another state? Maybe you are taking a vacation to visit relatives or in-laws, or perhaps you just have the urge to see the world and smell the flowers on the way. Whatever reason you hit the road, you'll want to stay healthy so you can enjoy the new city. Before you pack your bags and load up your trailer, let's review some of the cities and states that'll make you think twice about leaving behind your inhaler.

First off, a city coined "Hotlanta." The nickname alone can get one dehydrated! Atlanta, Georgia, has always had an annual high pollen count. Known for its hot, humid weather and air quality concerns, it has an above-average rate of problems related to asthma. Bring plenty of water and fluids to drink, and choose snacks high in water content such as watermelon, cucumber, strawberries, and popsicles.

Next off, ringing in tourists with its Liberty Bell, the city of brotherly love presents concerns for asthmatics. Roughly 16,000 children end up in the emergency room with asthma symptoms each year in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It has below-average air quality due to smoking, and poverty leaves people uninsured, so many struggle to afford healthcare. Avoid secondhand smoke exposure by staying in smoke-free areas, and remember to carry your rescue inhaler.

Next let's travel to Knoxville, Tennessee. This city is at an all-time high pollen count in the spring. Because grass and trees pollinate at an alarming rate, just breathing can be a challenge.

Tennessee is also known for its ragweed in the spring, a weed that is considered one of the

top ten pollen triggers for asthmatics. Minimize your exposure to pollens by limiting time spent outdoors during peak pollen times such as late morning and early afternoon.

Chicago, Illinois may not be the best city for breathing easy, as it's known for its poor air quality and high levels of smog and soot. This city is another one that brings high numbers in to the emergency room for asthma-related problems. Limit time outdoors during peak air quality index times where the ozone and/or particulate matter (2.5) levels are high. Check the air quality at [airnow.gov](http://airnow.gov).

Let's leave all these smoky cities behind for a moment and smell the roses. What other plants and flowers carry an aroma that can be welcome to the nose? We now head to Missouri, which is known for its ragweed, sunflowers, and the ever-so-popular chrysanthemums. These flowers are a wolf in sheep's clothing. Kansas City, Missouri, has more than troublesome air quality—this city is home to three flowers that may present problems for people with asthma.

Constant pollinating gives anyone with asthma or allergies a hard time. Bring enough allergy medication (such as antihistamines that you can buy over the counter) and fill prescriptions early (e.g., steroid nasal sprays, rescue and controller inhalers).

Thinking of moving to Oklahoma? Oklahoma City is ranked 15th out of the 220 cities with bad ozone quality. Humidity and all that extra heat can bring out the worst in those with asthma.

*By Stacey Riding*