

## Summer activities for kids: Having fun and staying safe

Summer is almost here! That means more sun and more fun—even if you have asthma.

### FUN SUMMER SPORTS

Sports aren't just a great way to get exercise, they're also a fun way to make friends and learn about teamwork. Children with asthma can play any sport, but some may work better than others. Baseball, gymnastics, and even football, all have chances for rest between activities. This makes them great choices for children who may need to take a break to catch their breath.

Biking and swimming are also great options. Both sports allow you to warm up slowly and set your own pace. The warm and wet air around swimming pools can also help keep symptoms away. Just make sure there's plenty of airflow if you choose to swim indoors. Strong chlorine smells can cause asthma attacks.

### BE CAREFUL OF OUTDOOR TRIGGERS

Picnics, hiking, and camping are great ways to get fresh air. Start your activities early in the morning to avoid high heat and stay inside if air quality is poor.

### MAKE A PLAN WITH YOUR DOCTOR

To have the best summer possible, make a plan with your child's doctor. Talk about their health and figure out which activities will work best.



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*Reference: Editorial Staff | July 2, 2018 Topics: Asthma Fitness. "Asthma in the Summer." American Lung Association, 2018, [www.lung.org/blog/asthma-in-the-summer#:~:text=Air%20pollution%2C%20hot%20and%20humid,are%20common%20summertime%20asthma%20triggers](http://www.lung.org/blog/asthma-in-the-summer#:~:text=Air%20pollution%2C%20hot%20and%20humid,are%20common%20summertime%20asthma%20triggers); Hudak, Bonnie B. "Can Kids and Teens With Asthma Play Sports?" Kids Health, 2017, [kidshealth.org/en/parents/asthma-sports.html#:~:text=Sure!,help%20the%20lungs%20work%20better](http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/asthma-sports.html#:~:text=Sure!,help%20the%20lungs%20work%20better).*



# Summer's in the air... and it can trigger your asthma

For many people, summer is the best time of the year. There are more hours of sunlight and no shortage of fun things to do outside. If you're living with asthma, it's important to remember that warmer weather can come with some challenges.

## KEEP AN EYE ON AIR QUALITY LEVELS

Research shows that air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse. Ozone, one of the most common air pollutants, contributes to smog and haze. It gets worse in the summer and can bother lungs and airways. The national Air Quality Index measures the levels of ozone and other pollutants. If the index reaches 101 or higher, it's unsafe for people with asthma. So, it's best to stay indoors between 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. You can check daily air quality levels at [AirNow.gov](https://airnow.gov).

## WHERE THERE'S FIRE, THERE'S SMOKE

Smoke can also lead to poor air quality and trigger symptoms. There's not much you can do about smoke caused by forest fires, apart from staying indoors when levels are high. However, there are other types of smoke you can avoid. Camping is a great way to enjoy the outdoors, but it's a good idea to keep some distance from the campfire. Both short-term and long-term exposure to smoke and other pollution can lead to asthma attacks and reduced lung function.

## ASTHMA DOESN'T NEED TO SLOW YOUR SUMMER FUN

Though it's vital to watch out for increased smoke and air pollution, there are plenty of ways to be outdoors and active in the summer. Hiking, biking, swimming, and other sports are great activities for people with asthma. Not to mention boating, camping, and exercising. Whatever you choose to do, here are a few things to remember:

- > Start out slow. Take time to warm up and adjust to the warmer temperatures.
- > Start early. Early mornings and evenings are the best times to beat the heat.
- > Stay hydrated. Make sure to drink plenty of water.

## MOST IMPORTANTLY REMEMBER TO HAVE FUN!

*References: "AAFA." Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; [www.aaafa.org/air-pollution-smog-asthma/](https://www.aaafa.org/air-pollution-smog-asthma/); Lungs, Breathing and Allergy Team. "8 Tips for Exercising Outdoors with Asthma." Health Essentials from Cleveland Clinic, Health Essentials from Cleveland Clinic, 9 Sept. 2020, [health.clevelandclinic.org/8-tips-for-exercising-outdoors-with-asthma/](https://health.clevelandclinic.org/8-tips-for-exercising-outdoors-with-asthma/).*

# Pets: Should They Stay, or Should They Go?

**PICTURE THIS:** You just found out your child is allergic to Fuzzy, the cat she adores. Your doctor suggests finding Fuzzy a new home. While you want to ease your daughter's asthma symptoms, you don't want to break her heart. Do you have any other choices? If your daughter's asthma isn't serious, you may wish to consult her doctor and try reducing her reactions by:

- > Keeping the cat out of your child's room and restricting it to certain areas of the house
- > Removing carpet from your child's room—if not from the whole house
- > Cleaning the room (along with the walls) to remove allergens once the cat has been banished and carpet removed
- > Using a vacuum with a HEPA filter

If you must find a new family for Fuzzy, don't replace the beloved pet with a so-called nonallergenic cat (or dog)—there's no such thing. And keep in mind that birds can trigger allergies too. Perhaps think about getting some friendly fish instead.

*References: American Academy of Pediatrics; Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America; Coffey Communications*

## ASTHMA 2020 UPDATES

**NEW GUIDELINES** were released in 2020 about asthma treatments. Work with your healthcare provider to come up with an action plan based on these new asthma guidelines such as:

- > Taking medications as prescribed
- > Changing environmental causes that may worsen symptoms
- > Learning how to better handle your asthma
- > Watching and changing care as needed

*Reference: "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)." National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/asthma-management-guidelines-2020-updates/faqs](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/asthma-management-guidelines-2020-updates/faqs).*







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