

Paige Has Asthma

FOR CHILDREN

1 What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways — the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. These tubes can become swollen and narrow, and extra sticky mucus can build up inside. This can make breathing harder. Medicine and an asthma care plan can help people breathe more easily.

2 What are some things that can trigger asthma, and what can people do to help?

Smoke, dust mites, pollen, mold, cold air, and colds can trigger asthma symptoms. Some people also react to pets or strong smells. Each person's triggers can be different. Families can help by keeping the air smoke-free, reducing contact with triggers, and following an asthma action plan — a plan from their healthcare provider that explains how to manage asthma.

3 What are some common signs that someone with asthma may experience?

Someone with asthma may cough, feel out of breath, or notice that their chest feels tight. They may also make a whistling sound when breathing, called wheezing. These signs can happen during the day or at night, and not everyone has all of them.

4 What would you do if a friend was having trouble breathing?

Get a grown-up right away and help your friend sit upright. A grown-up can help them follow their asthma action plan and use their prescribed quick-relief medicine. If breathing is very hard, your friend is getting worse, or their medicine is not helping, call 911 immediately or ask someone to call. Stay nearby while help comes.

5 Can children with asthma still participate in school activities and sports?

Yes! With the right treatment and an asthma action plan, children with asthma can enjoy sports, recess, and school activities. Teachers and coaches should know how to help. Some children need medicine before exercise, as directed by their healthcare provider. Anyone who has trouble breathing should stop the activity and tell a grown-up right away.

6 How can classmates make school a welcoming place for everyone, even if someone has a health condition like asthma?

We can invite everyone to join us, listen to what they need, and never tease someone for taking medicine or needing a break. We can work with our teacher to find ways for everyone to take part. Everyone deserves to feel welcome and included!

7 How can we be a good friend to someone who has asthma?

We can ask, "How can I help?" and listen to our friend's answer. We can be patient when they need a break and never pressure them to keep playing when they do not feel well. Most of all, we can enjoy our friendship and remember that asthma is only one part of who they are.

8 What is one important lesson you learned from this story?

Everyone's body has different needs, but everyone deserves kindness and friendship. We can help by including others, listening, and getting a grown-up when someone needs help.

FOR PARENTS**1 Does your child know what asthma is and how it affects Paige in the story?**

Ask your child to explain asthma in their own words after reading. This helps you understand what they absorbed and opens the door to correct any misunderstandings gently. Children often understand more than we expect when a story makes it real.

2 Has your child ever seen someone use an inhaler or have trouble breathing? How did they react?

Children may feel scared, confused, or unsure how to respond when they witness a health event. Use this question to explore their feelings and reassure them that adults are there to help. Normalizing what they saw reduces fear and builds empathy.

3 Does your child know what to do if a friend or classmate is having trouble breathing?

Reinforce the message from the book: find a grown-up immediately, stay calm, and stay with the friend. Practice this with your child so the steps feel familiar. Knowing what to do helps children feel confident rather than helpless in an emergency.

4 How can our family help make spaces more asthma-friendly for children who visit our home?

Simple steps like keeping the home smoke-free, vacuuming regularly, using fragrance-free products, and asking about a child's triggers before they visit can make a real difference. Modeling this consideration teaches your child that inclusion is an everyday practice.

5 What did this story teach your child about including friends who have a health condition?

Paige's story shows that a health condition is only one part of a person. Encourage your child to see their friends as whole people — not defined by their diagnosis. Ask what they would do differently on the playground or at a birthday party to make sure everyone can join in.

FOR TEACHERS**1 Do I have a current asthma action plan on file for every student in my class who has asthma?**

An asthma action plan, provided by the student's healthcare provider, outlines their triggers, daily medications, and steps to take during an asthma episode. Confirm with your school nurse that plans are current, accessible, and that you know exactly where the student's rescue inhaler is kept.

2 Am I confident in recognizing the signs of an asthma episode and responding appropriately?

Signs include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Know your school's emergency protocol, where rescue medication is stored, and when to call 911. If you are unsure, ask your school nurse to walk you through the steps — being prepared is the most important thing you can do.

3 How do I ensure that physical activity remains accessible and safe for students with asthma?

Work with the school nurse and the student's family to understand exercise-related triggers and any pre-exercise medication needs. Allow the student to self-pace, take breaks, and step out if needed — without drawing attention. Modify activities when necessary and never pressure a student to push through symptoms.

4 How do I address asthma-related absences or disruptions in a way that protects the student's dignity?

Avoid singling out students when they need to take medication, leave the room, or rest. Provide catch-up support without making absences feel punitive. A private check-in when a student returns helps them feel welcomed back rather than behind.

5 How can I use Paige's story to build a classroom culture of empathy and inclusion around health differences?

Read the book aloud and facilitate a discussion using the children's questions in this guide. Normalize the idea that everyone's body has different needs, and that being a good friend means paying attention and asking how to help. A classroom where health differences are met with curiosity rather than fear is safer for every student.
