



# Asthma

[KidsHealth.org/classroom](https://www.kidshealth.org/classroom)

## Teacher's Guide

This guide includes:

- Standards
- Related Links
- Activities for Students
- Reproducible Materials

## Standards

This guide correlates with the following National Health Education Standards:

Children will:

- Comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to access valid information and products and services to enhance health.
- Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standards: [www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm)

Activities in this guide also correlate with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes.

These outcomes are denoted on each individual activity. Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/elof-ohs-framework.pdf>

The following unit includes five early literacy-based health activities focused on asthma. Choose one daily to help your children explore asthma over the course of a week.

## KidsHealth Links to Share:

### Asthma

[KidsHealth.org/en/kids/asthma.html](https://www.kidshealth.org/en/kids/asthma.html)

## Resources for Teachers:

### Asthma Special Needs Factsheet

[KidsHealth.org/en/parents/asthma-factsheet.html](https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/asthma-factsheet.html)

### Asthma and Sports Special Needs Factsheet

[KidsHealth.org/en/parents/asthma-sports-factsheet.html](https://www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/asthma-sports-factsheet.html)

## Reproducible Materials:

**Activity Cards:** Nemours Reading BrightStart! Alphabet Cards

**Word Cards:** Asthma Bingo

**Letter Mats:** Asthma Bingo

**Writing Page:** Asthma Triggers

**Assessment:** Print Awareness Checklist



## Large Group Book Experience: Oral Language

### Learning About Asthma

#### Literacy Standard:

*This activity correlates with the following Head Start Early Learning Outcomes:*

Children will:

- P-LC2: Understand and respond to increasingly complex communication and language from others.
- P-LC6: Understand and use a wide variety of words for a variety of purposes.

#### Objectives:

Children will:

- Identify what asthma is and learn some symptoms of an asthma flare-up.
- Show how to help a friend who is having an asthma flare-up.

#### Materials:

- Suggested Book – I Have Asthma, What Does That Mean? – Wendy Chen (or any age-appropriate book about asthma)
- Chart paper
- Chart markers

#### Class Time:

15 - 20 minutes

#### Activity:

##### Clarify Learning Objectives

This week, we are learning about asthma and what it means to have asthma. Today, I brought in a book for us to read together and learn about asthma. I also brought chart paper and colorful markers, so we can work together on a plan for how to help a friend with asthma. Who's ready to learn about asthma?

##### Introduce the Book

- **Demonstrate proper book handling and point to each word of the title as you read:**  
Look at this new book I brought with me today! Where should I turn to find the title of my book? Is it on the back? (Pause). No! How about inside the pages? (Pause). No! Oh! I hear you saying to look at the cover of the book! Here's the cover of the book! Does anyone see the title of my book here on the cover? Yes! (Child's name) found the title in big, black letters! This book is called I Have Asthma, What Does That Mean? It is written by Wendy Chen and illustrated by Izzy Bean.
- **Allow children to see the front and/or back cover of the book to make predictions:**  
Do you see the four kids on the cover of our book? Look at those big smiles! What do you think this book will be about? Yes, you are correct! This book is about the little boy, who is pointing to himself, on the cover. He has asthma and we are going to learn all about it.  
Why do you think the author wrote this book? What does she want us to learn? Let's take a quick flip through the pictures inside to see if it helps us answer those questions. Those are all great answers! It looks like the author wrote this book to help us learn about what asthma is, what happens when someone has asthma, and how we can help our friends with asthma! Let's read together to find out more.



# Asthma

## Read and Introduce Vocabulary

- **As you read, include opportunities for discussion and introduce vocabulary:**

The boy in the book says, “I have asthma!” Does anyone know what asthma is? I like the way you’re thinking! Asthma is a health problem that makes it hard to breathe. This happens because the tubes or “airways” that carry air to our lungs when we breathe swell up, fill with mucus, and get smaller. This makes it hard for air to get through. What do you notice about the boy in the picture? Yes, he is coughing. Our book says, “Sometimes I cough, sometimes I wheeze, sometimes I find it hard to breathe.” Wheezing is a whistling sound that happens when someone is having a hard time breathing. Let’s read on to find out more about asthma.

- **Explore the images of the young boy in environments that trigger his asthma and introduce vocabulary:**

In this picture, I see many things that can make asthma worse. These things are called triggers. “Trigger” is a new word! Triggers can make a person with asthma cough, wheeze, or have trouble breathing. What do you see that can make the boy sneeze? Yes! Flowers and being around animals like cats, dogs and bunnies make him sneeze! What do you notice about this picture of the little boy in the cold weather? Yes! I see that his nose and cheeks are red! Maybe he is having trouble breathing! These triggers can make asthma worse.

- **As you talk about asthma flare-ups, introduce the page about a nebulizer. Discuss its use:**

Uh oh! It looks like the little boy is having a hard time breathing in his bed. Look at him putting his hand on his chest. That tells us he’s having trouble breathing. The little boy is having what’s called an “asthma flare-up.” This is when it’s hard to breathe. Look at the picture of his airways over here! They look swollen and tight. Let’s see what happens next. His mom comes in with his medicine and a special machine called a nebulizer. Have any of you seen one of these before? Some of you have one here to use at school. A nebulizer is a machine that turns liquid medicine into a mist that can be breathed in. It’s a great way to get the medicine right into the lungs to help someone with asthma breathe easier.

Some people can use an inhaler instead of a nebulizer. An inhaler is much smaller than a nebulizer. It is another way to get medicine right into the lungs to help someone with asthma breathe better. I don’t see one in this picture, but I will be sure to look for one in the book and show it to you.

## Read and Expand Learning Concepts with Children

- **Integrate concepts with previous knowledge:**

Now that we know what asthma is, how it makes people feel, and how to take asthma medicine, let’s make a plan to help friends in our classroom who have asthma. I will write our plan on my chart paper!

First, what should we look for? Yes! We should look for anyone who is having trouble breathing! A friend could be coughing, wheezing, or holding his or her chest -- just like the boy in our book!

- **Make real-world connections to events in children’s lives:**

If we see this happening, in our classroom or on the playground, what do you think we should do? (Pause). I like your answers! Watch as I write them on our paper and make a list for us! (Write the bold words on the chart paper).

First, ask if your friend is OK.

Next, if your friend is not feeling well, ask your friend to sit down.

Then, get help! Tell a teacher or adult and take them to your friend.

Now, we know just what to do to help a friend in need!

## Summary Statement

Thank you for reading and learning with me today about asthma. Today we learned what asthma looks like, what makes it worse, and how to help a friend having an asthma flare-up. Thanks for reading with me today. Great learning!



## Small Group Literacy Activity: Letter Knowledge

### Looking for Letters

#### Literacy Standard:

*This activity correlates with the following Head Start Early Learning Outcomes:*

Children will:

- P-LIT3: Identify letters of the alphabet and produce the correct sounds associated with letters.

#### Objectives:

Children will:

- Locate letters hidden within the classroom environment.
- Name some letters of the alphabet.
- Recognize that words are made up of letters.
- Identify what it feels like to have asthma.

#### Materials:

- Activity Cards: Nemours Reading BrightStart! Alphabet Cards
- Plastic or paper straw (one for each child)
- Small whiteboard
- Dry erase marker

#### Class Time:

10 - 15 minutes

#### Activity:

##### Clarify Learning Objectives

This week, we are learning about asthma. Our book, [I Have Asthma, What Does That Mean?](#), is filled with words that tell us all about asthma. We see words on the front cover, the back cover and the pages of the book. Did you know those words are made up of letters? Today, we are going to learn some of the special letters in our book. Who's ready to explore with me?

##### Introduce the Materials

- **Write the word "asthma" on a small whiteboard and place it on the table. Gather two sets of Nemours Reading BrightStart! Alphabet Cards that represent the letters in the word asthma. Hide one set around the room and place the other on the table. Allow kids to explore:**
- This is the word "asthma" written on my small whiteboard and these are our alphabet cards. Both the written word and the alphabet cards have special letters. Do you recognize these letters? Some letters will be familiar and others might be new.
- **Explain the purpose of the activity and clarify the instructions:**  
Let's play a game! I have hidden the alphabet cards around the classroom. Your job is to find an alphabet card and bring it to the table so we can put letters together to make a word.

##### Incorporate Multisensory Learning as You Engage With Children and Offer Encouragement

- **Encourage children to move their entire bodies as they move around the classroom in search of the alphabet cards:**  
Would you like to join me on a letter hunt? Get ready to search for the alphabet cards in the room. Remember to search up, up, high and down, down, low. When you find an alphabet card, you may return to your seat.



- **Match the alphabet card letter with the letters in the written word “asthma.” Continue until each child has had the opportunity to match an alphabet card to a written letter:**  
Great job, friends! It looks like each of you has found a letter. Now, let’s match our alphabet card to the letters in the word “asthma.” Let’s look at your alphabet card first, (child’s name). What letter do you have? Yes! You have the letter (letter name) on your alphabet card. The letter (letter name) makes the (letter sound) sound. Can you say that with me? Now, let’s look at the word on our whiteboard. Can you find the matching letter? (Pause). Yes! You found the letter (letter name) in the word “asthma.” You made a match!
- **Be sure each child has successful opportunities to participate before moving on.**
- **Discuss how it would feel to breathe during an asthma flare-up, giving each child a straw to breathe through:**  
Now that we have found our letters and matched them to our word, let’s talk about how it might feel to breathe during an asthma flare-up. Here is a straw for each of you. Place it in your mouth, just as you would to drink from a cup. Now, breathe through the straw. How does it feel? Yes, it’s hard to breathe! Now, take the straw out of your mouth and breathe in and out. What do you notice? Yes, it’s easier to breathe!  
Breathing with the straw is what it might feel like for someone having an asthma flare-up. Now you know why people with asthma need their medicine. It helps them to breathe better.
- **Repeat the activity several times as long as children are engaged.**

**Summary Statement**

Today we named and matched letters and learned how it might feel to have asthma. Thanks for playing with me!



## Small Group Literacy Activity: Phonological Awareness

### Asthma Bingo

#### Literacy Standard:

*This activity correlates with the following Head Start Early Learning Outcomes:*

Children will:

- P-LIT1: Demonstrate awareness that spoken language is composed of smaller segments of sound.

#### Objectives:

Children will:

- Isolate the beginning sound of a word and connect it to the letter associated with that sound.
- Use words related to asthma with understanding and confidence.

#### Materials:

- Word Cards: Asthma Bingo (cut out and place into a basket)
- Letter Mats 1-4: Asthma Bingo
- Bingo markers (chips or ink daubers)
- Basket

#### Class Time:

10 - 15 minutes

#### Activity:

##### Clarify Learning Objectives

This week, we are learning about our teeth and how to keep them healthy. Today, we are going to use our picture cards and play a fun listening game! Get your listening ears ready!

##### Promote Compound Word Awareness by Singing a Song

- **Introduce new song:**

Listen to the fun, new song I have for us today. See if you can hear any of the words we have been talking about.

*(Sing to the tune of: Mary Had a Little Lamb)*

*Asthma begins with the letter A.*

*The letter A, the letter A.*

*Asthma begins the letter A and makes a sound like this /A/!*

Did you hear a word that we have been talking about? Yes, "Asthma!" You are great listeners.

- **Encourage the children to sing or chant the new tune with you:**

Let's sing the song again but this time I would like for you to sing our song with me. Are you ready?

*Asthma begins with the letter A.*

*The letter A, the letter A.*

*Asthma begins the letter A and makes a sound like this /A/!*

Now that we warmed up our listening ears, let's play a sound game together with some of the words we have been learning.



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## Introduce the Materials

- **Place the asthma bingo letter mats within reach of the children and allow them to explore:**  
Look at these letter mats! Do they look different to you today? What do you notice? Yes! These letter mats are filled with letters! Today, we will play a new version of bingo with our asthma words and the letters you see on your mat.
- **Explain the purpose of the game and clarify the instructions:**  
First, I will pick a word card from my basket and say the word. Then, we will decide together what sound and letter we hear at the beginning of the word. When we identify it, you will look for the matching letter on your letter mat and cover it with a marker like this. When you cover three letters in a row, be sure to call out “bingo!” The first friend to cover three correct letters in a row will be the winner!

## Practice Listening to Initial Sounds Together

- **Demonstrate how to identify the initial sound of words:**  
Listen, listen, with your ear.  
For the first sound that you hear.  
My word is “cough.” /c/.../c/...cough. When I say the word cough, the first sound I hear is the /c/.../c/.../c/ sound. The letter C makes the /c/ sound. Do you see the letter C on your letter mat? Cover it with a bingo marker! Great listening and covering.
- **Encourage each child to identify the initial sound of words:**  
Now let’s try another word. This time, I want you to tell me the letter sound and letter name that you hear. Are you ready?  
Listen, listen, with your ear.  
For the first sound that you hear.  
My word is “breathe.” What letter sound did you hear, (child’s name)? Yes! You heard the /b/.../b/.../b/ sound when I say breathe. What letter makes the /b/.../b/.../b/ sound? That’s right! The letter B makes the /b/.../b/.../b/ sound. Can you find the letter B on your letter mat? Go ahead and cover it!
- **Continue picking new words from the basket until a child has bingo.**
- **Be sure each child has successful opportunities to participate in the activity before moving on.**

## Summary Statement

Today, we learned a song about asthma and played a fun game of letter bingo. We learned to listen for beginning sounds in special words about asthma. Thanks for playing and learning with me!



## Small Group Literacy Activity: Beginning Writing

### Asthma Triggers

#### Literacy Standard:

*This activity correlates with the following Head Start Early Learning Outcomes:*

Children will:

- P-LIT6: Write with a variety of purposes using increasingly sophisticated marks.

#### Objectives:

Children will:

- Use their knowledge to identify asthma triggers.
- Demonstrate increasing strength, control, and coordination of the small muscles used for writing and drawing

#### Materials:

- Writing Page: Asthma Triggers
- Book - [I Have Asthma, What Does That Mean?](#) - Wendy Chen
- Writing materials: colored pencils, markers, crayons

#### Class Time:

15 - 20 minutes

#### Activity:

##### Clarify Learning Objectives

This week, we are learning all about asthma. Today, we will talk more about the asthma triggers that we learned about in our book. Triggers are things that can make asthma worse. Once we have reviewed the asthma triggers, we can use our writing materials to draw a picture of the trigger you know the most about. Then, we can share our pictures with our classmates! Are you ready?

##### Introduce the Activity

- **Discuss the materials and how to use them:**

Each of you has a writing page in front of you. Look at the top of the page and tell me what you see. Yes! There are two large words written at the top of the page. These words say “Asthma Triggers.” We will use these crayons and markers to draw the asthma triggers we learned about this week. Then, you can try to write words on your paper.

- **Review asthma triggers:**

Who remembers what things can make asthma worse? Let’s look at the pages in our book to help us remember. Those are some great answers. Being around pets, dust, trees and flowers, cold weather and having a cold or the flu can all be triggers for people with asthma. I think we missed one! Does anyone remember the story of the little boy playing a sport? Yes, he was playing soccer. That little boy’s trigger was exercise. For some kids and adults, exercise can trigger asthma, too!



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- **Model an example of drawing and writing as you talk with the children about the writing process:**  
Now that we remember all of the asthma triggers, we are going to draw them on our papers. I am going to draw a picture of a friend smelling a flower. Watch how I start at the bottom of the page and draw a long stem. Now, I am going to change colors and make petals for my flower. After I color my flower, I will add leaves and a word to my page. Watch me write the word “asthma” on my writing page.

## Offer Encouragement

- **Encourage children to independently draw an asthma trigger:**  
Which asthma triggers did you want to draw about today? Yes! A pet can be a trigger. What color fur will your pet have? Great idea! Now, go ahead and draw that cute, little pet!
- **Compliment and praise the children on their attempts at writing:**  
Wow! Look at all the details in your picture. Keep it up! You are going to have a wonderful drawing when you are finished. I see you are taking your time. Your little, gray kitty looks fantastic! I also see that you wrote the letter (letter name) at the top of your paper! Nice writing, (child’s name)!

## Share and Discuss Drawings

- **Encourage each child to share his drawing and writing:**  
Who would like to tell us about their drawing?  
Look at that picture of a snowman and snow coming down. Cold weather is definitely an asthma trigger. You have a wonderful drawing. Thank you, (child’s name), for sharing!
- **Continue until each child has had a chance to share**

## Summary Statement

Today we talked about asthma triggers, drew pictures of triggers and shared our pictures with friends! Thank you for drawing and writing with me today!



## Small Group Literacy Activity: Print Awareness

### Exploring Print

#### Literacy Standard:

*This activity correlates with the following Head Start Early Learning Outcomes:*

Children will:

- P-LIT2: Demonstrate an understanding of how print is used (functions of print) and the rules that govern how print works (conventions of print).

#### Objectives:

Children will:

- Identify the features (parts) of a book (author, illustrator, front cover, back cover, title page, and table of contents).
- Explore the conventions (rules) of print (tracking left to right and how to hold a book).
- Identify what a friend with asthma can do just like any other child.

#### Materials:

- Assessment: Print Awareness Checklist
- Suggested Book - [I Have Asthma](#) - Jennifer Moore-Mallinos (or any age-appropriate book about asthma)

#### Class Time:

10 - 15 minutes

#### Activity:

##### Clarify Learning Objectives

This week, we are learning all about asthma. Today, we will use a new book to learn how a friend with asthma can do anything any other child can. We will also identify the different ways printed words are organized. Are you ready to read with me?

- (Optional) Use the Print Awareness Checklist, as you engage, to record each child's progress.

##### Introduce the Features of the Book

- Place the book, [I Have Asthma](#), within reach of the children
- Allow children to explore the parts of the book:

Look at this book! What do you see? Yes! You see the front cover. The front cover tells us the title of the book and the name of the author. Can you touch the title of this book? You found the title, it says [I Have Asthma](#). Now, can you touch the name of the author? Yes, you found the author's name right here on the cover! I wonder what you would see if you flip this book on its side. That's right! You'll see the spine of the book. The spine of this book has words on it. It also tells us the title of the book and the author's name. Do you see the words? Yes! Here they are.

- Direct children to the Title Page:

When I open the book to the first page, I see a title page. Can someone tell me how we might use this? A title page tells us when and where the book was published or printed.



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## Introduce the Conventions of Print

- **Allow children to explore the rules of print as you assess knowledge of where to begin reading a book:** (Child's name), use your hands to hold this book the correct way. Now, turn to the page where we begin reading. Great job! Can you touch the picture on this page? It's a picture of a boy having a hard time breathing. Can you touch the words on this page? Yes, it says, "I have asthma!" Thank you, (child's name)! You found the picture and the words. We look at the pictures and we read the words. Can you say that with me? (Encourage children to repeat the phrase).
- **Assess knowledge of directionality:** (Child's name), can you find the next page? Thank you! I like the way you gently turned the page in the book.  
I see more words on this page. Can you show me how to read these words? Yes! We read these words from top to bottom and left to right. Watch me track the words as I read!
- **Use your finger to track words in a sweeping motion as you sing the following chant. Encourage children to sing and track print with you:**

*(Sing to the tune of: Oh My Darling)*  
*Top to bottom.*  
*Top to bottom.*  
*Top to bottom, left to right.*  
*That's the way the words are written.*  
*Top to bottom, left to right.*

- **Assess knowledge of one-to-one correspondence and concept of word:**  
The first words I read are at the top of this page. It says, "I have asthma." How many words are written? Clap and count with me. I (clap)... have (clap)... asthma (clap). How many times did you clap? That's right! You clapped three times because there are three words written. One...two...three.  
Touch the word "asthma." This is one word, but it is made up of many letters. How many letters do you see in the word "asthma?" Tap and count them with me. A (tap)...S (tap)...T (tap)...H (tap)... M (tap) ... A (tap). How many times did you tap? That's right! You tapped six times because there are six letters in this word. One...two...three...four...five...six.
- **Continue to review these important skills as you move through the remaining pages of the book.**
- **Assess knowledge of reading comprehension:**  
Let's continue to read in this book and learn more about asthma together.  
Wow! What a great book! Did you notice what this little boy liked to do? (Pause). He liked to play soccer. Did the little boy in this book have to stop having fun or doing the things he liked to do? No! He just needs to care for his asthma. What does the little boy need to do now to help with his asthma? You are right! He needs to bring his inhaler with him in case he needs it when he is playing soccer or around any of his triggers. Great job remembering what we read about today! I am glad that you now know that having asthma doesn't change our friends!

## Summary Statement

Today, we explored the parts of a book, read a story about asthma, counted words and letters, and learned how our friends with asthma take care of themselves. Thanks for reading and listening with me!