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## **10 Ways to Avoid Back-to-School Asthma and Allergy Flare-Ups** **Millions of children with asthma and allergies are returning to school as swine flu circulates around the globe.**

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Topics: [swine flu](#), [asthma](#), [allergies](#)

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### what you can do

Set up a tour of your child's school to look for potential allergy and asthma triggers.



To keep kids breathing easy, make sure teachers and school staff are part of the treatment plan.

RODALE NEWS, EMMAUS, PA—Children across the country are gearing up to head back to school, but millions of them will need to manage asthma and allergies along with homework assignments and soccer practice. This time of year, the mix of pollens and mold spores in the air, coupled with allergens and viruses that build up inside the school, is prime time for asthma and allergy attacks. Asthma, which can be triggered by allergies and respiratory illnesses, causes nearly a 50 percent increase in emergency room visits among children during the season. It's also the number one reason why students chronically miss school. This year, it's more important than ever to keep your child's lungs healthy because the novel H1N1 virus, known as swine flu, invades deeper into the lungs and sickens children more than the regular flu. Kids with asthma may be especially vulnerable.

What should parents do to make sure their kids breathe easier this school year? We asked representatives of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), and they suggest taking these 10 steps:

**#1. Schedule a back-to-school checkup.** Visit your allergist to be sure your child's allergy and asthma symptoms are under control. If your child suffers from allergies but has never seen an allergist, before school starts is the perfect time to schedule an appointment to find out what triggers his or her symptoms and develop a plan for treatment.

**#2. Share your treatment plan.** The school staff should have a copy of your child's treatment plan, which should include a list of substances that trigger your child's allergies or asthma, a list of medications the child takes, and a list of those to contact in an emergency.

**#3. Meet with the school nurse, teachers, and coaches.** All caregivers who supervise your child during the school day should have a copy of the treatment plan, and you should meet with them to discuss how they can help control your child's symptoms. Signs of irritability, an inability to concentrate, or temper tantrums may be signs that your child is having symptoms of asthma or allergies. Ask school staff to tell you when and where the symptoms worsen, so you can work with the doctor to adjust the treatment plan accordingly.

**#4. Discuss how to handle emergencies.** With an allergist's recommendation, children should be permitted to keep inhaled medications with them at school, and most states have laws protecting this right. Children who are at risk for a life-threatening allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) also should have an epinephrine kit to prevent the dangerous reaction that may be caused by allergies to certain foods or insect stings. Be sure that your child knows, as do school staff, how to use emergency medications. Complete a permission form that allows school staff to administer medications if needed.

**#5. Make sure your child understands the triggers.** Discuss steps to avoid triggers while at school, like sitting far from the blackboard if chalk dust triggers asthma.

**#6. Investigate class pets.** If your child is allergic to animal dander, ask that class pets that could trigger a reaction, such as hamsters or rabbits, be removed.

**#7. Consider the gym.** After-school sports, recess, and gym class activities can trigger asthma attacks. Rather than keep your child out of Phys Ed, [which is important for kids' academic performance as well as their fitness](#), work with coaches, recess monitors, and physical-education teachers so they recognize the major signs and symptoms of asthma, such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

**#8. Share food allergy information far and wide.** Share a list of the foods your child is allergic to, and safe alternatives, with teachers, lunch attendants, the school nurse, and class volunteers. Don't forget to alert your child's art teacher and Boy or Girl Scout leader, as well; food is often used in art projects and after-school activities.

**#9. Ward off the flu.** Have your child get a flu shot, especially if he or she has asthma. Because both asthma and the flu are respiratory diseases, people with asthma may have more frequent and severe asthma attacks when they have the flu, and they're at greater risk for more severe illness and life-threatening complications.

**#10. Tour your child's school.** Visit classrooms, art rooms, the gymnasium, the cafeteria, and other school areas to identify substances that may trigger asthma or allergy symptoms.

Visit [AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org](http://AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org) to find an allergist near you, take a Relief Self-Test for you or your child, and learn more about allergies and asthma.