

Wheezing

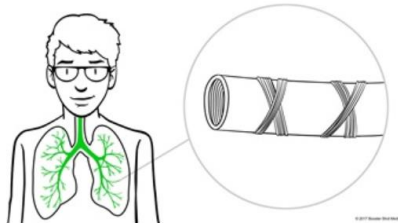
What is wheezing?

A wheeze is a high-pitched whistling sound made during breathing. Wheezing happens when the airways, or breathing tubes, get smaller and it is hard to get air in and out. It is the sound of air trying to move through the smaller airways. Your child may or may not wheeze again. Wheezing does not always mean your child will have asthma.

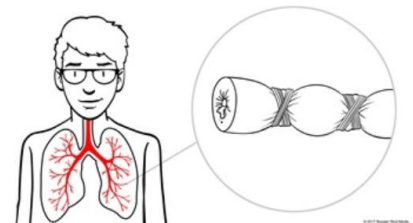
What makes the airways smaller?

- Tight muscles around the breathing tubes.
- Sticky fluid (called mucous) in the airways.
- Swelling of the airway.

**Normal
Airway**



**Wheezing
Airway**



What causes wheezing?

- Viruses (like a cold)
- Asthma
- Infections such as pneumonia
- Allergies
- Cigarette smoke

What other symptoms happen with wheezing?

- Coughing more than usual
- Shortness of breath
- A tight feeling in the chest

How is wheezing treated?

Sometimes suctioning the nose will help treat wheezing. Saline drops may help thin the mucus before suctioning.

- Medicines that may be used to treat wheezing:
 - **Albuterol** relaxes the muscles that are squeezing around the airways. This medicine helps within minutes.
 - **Steroids** taken by mouth or inhaled into the lungs decrease swelling in the lungs. This medicine starts helping within a few hours.
- Use a cool mist humidifier to add moisture in the bedroom. Clean the humidifier often.
- Do not give your child cough medicine.
- If old enough, encourage your child to cough up and spit it out any mucous.
- Offer your child plenty of fluids.
- Plan for quiet activities while the medicines begin to work.

ALERT: Call 911 if your child's fingers or lips are dark, blue or gray.

Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child:

- Is coughing or wheezing more.
- Is not getting better with albuterol.
- Has trouble eating, talking, sleeping, or walking.
- Has a hard time breathing. This might look like:
 - Breathing faster or harder
 - Nose opening wide
 - Chest or neck pulling with each breath
 - Stomach going in and out with each breath
 - Hunching or leaning over
- Will not drink. Is vomiting, including fluids or medicine.
- Has signs of dehydration. This might look like:
 - Not crying tears
 - Dry mouth
 - No urine for 8-10 hours
- Is less active or has no interest in playing.
- Has a new fever over 101°F.
- Has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.