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exposure to cold air, cockroaches, molds and everything that triggers allergic rhinitis also may trigger asthma. Don't smoke! Cigarette smoke is one of the worst triggers of asthma.

To control your child's asthma, you must know how to treat an acute asthma attack and prevent future attacks. Albuterol (e.g. Proventil, Ventolin) inhaler is a rescue medicine—it relieves acute asthma symptoms by opening up the airways. It does NOT affect the progression of the disease—chronic inflammation and damage of the airways.

If your child uses a rescue medication more than 2 times a week, wakes up in the middle of the night more than twice a month, or can't participate in daily activities or sports, see your child's physician for new treatment options. Your child may need a long-term controller medication.

Long-term controller medications include inhaled steroids (e.g. Pulmicort, Flovent, QVAR) and/or a leukotriene inhibitor (e.g. Singulair). If your child is appropriately using one of these medications and still needs Albuterol more than two times a week, a long-acting Albuterol (e.g. Serevent) or combination inhaled steroid and Serevent (e.g. Advair) is another option. You should discuss the symptoms with your doctor before making any changes in your child's medications.

Treating hayfever's drippy nose as previously discussed has been shown to improve asthma in children who have both allergic rhinitis and asthma—as many as 78% of asthma patients also have nasal allergies.

Asthma and allergies should not interfere with your child's life. With education and new treatment choices such as long-term controller medications, your child can run, play, sleep soundly, do well in school and enjoy springtime.

Dr. Candace Reimer is an Allergy/Immunology specialist at Kaiser Sunset (Los Angeles Medical Center). Dr. Tanya Reimer Altmann is a board-certified pediatrician in private practice in Westlake Village.

## The Joy of Fatherhood

Often, men find more impediments to being an involved father than they had expected. Sometimes new moms are ambivalent about handing over their newborns, even to their own husbands. Many moms feel such a strong bond with their babies that they have a hard time sharing that crucial bonding time with anyone, even Dad. Other mothers worry that the new fathers won't know what to do or will accidentally hurt the baby. Clearly, the only way for men to learn how to be a good parent to their babies is through experience. Unfortunately, few men have good role models guiding them in what a 21st century active Dad looks like. Most men don't share their parenting struggles and joys with one another and therefore are left in the dark. Job demands are probably the most common obstacles most men face and, whether by choice or by necessity, only 1-3% of men take advantage of paternity leave. It is still uncommon enough that paternity leave is frequently unpaid, employers discourage it and there are concerns about being put on the "daddy-track."

Despite all of these obstacles, most men today realize there is no more significant moment in a man's life than when he becomes a father. Often times the responsibility, shift in identity, and sheer power of the love involved is overwhelming. How do you make that shift? What can you do to be a better father? How can you help your child grow to be a healthy, well-adjusted person?

The greatest gift you can give as a father is to have a healthy loving relationship with your child. Because that relationship is their first relationship with a man, it becomes the template for his/her relationships with men for a long time to come.



Dr. Jenn Berman

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According to a report by the National Fatherhood Initiative, father love (measured by children's perceptions of paternal acceptance/rejection and affection/indifference) was as important as mother love in predicting the social, emotional, and cognitive development and functioning of children and young adults. Having a loving and nurturing father was as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother. It has also been shown that children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to perform well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social tendencies, and avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy and criminal activity.

Modeling a loving relationship with your spouse is another great way to be a super dad. The absence of familial hostility is the most consistent correlate of child adjustment, whereas marital conflict is the most consistently reliable correlate of child maladjustment. This is not to say every fight with your spouse is going to harm your child's well-being. Quite the contrary. Constructive marital disagreements may be a positive influence, teaching children valuable lessons about conflict expression and negotiation. The problem occurs when there is consistent anger, hostility, and discord in the home. If this is something you are experiencing in your own home, I implore you to explore

marital therapy. If you cannot do it for yourself or your spouse, do it for the sake of your child, your children. A better relationship between the parents can foster a better relationship with the child. Research shows that fathers in close, confiding marriages have more positive attitudes toward their 3-month-old infants and toward their roles as parents than did fathers in less successful marriages. The same studies showed that mothers in close, confiding marriages were warmer and more sensitive.

Really listen to your child. It is easy to make assumptions or projections onto our kids or to zone out after a long day or to stop listening altogether. This is one of the most important skills you have in your arsenal. Feeling seen, heard and understood by primary caregivers is one of the foundations of a child's self esteem. In addition, sensitivity or the ability to evaluate a child's signals or needs and respond appropriately is cru-



Photo: Sharon Holly

cial to both involvement and closeness. Many of the studies dealing with paternal influences show that the closeness of the father-child relationship, which is itself a consequence of sufficiently extensive and sensitive interactions, is a crucial determinant of the father's impact on child development and adjustment.

In order for kids to feel a sense of safety and security, they need consistent rules and boundaries from their parents, especially their fathers. Too many parents today are overly concerned with being a friend to their child or being liked than they are about being good parents. Children do not need tall friends. They need a world where there are consequences to their actions and boundaries for their behaviors. They will always try to test you to see if you will bend. But deep down inside children are comforted by parents who create a structured family life and maintain consistent discipline.

There is no job that is more difficult than being a parent. The pressure to do the right thing and be a good role model is immense, but the rewards are out of this world.

Dr. Jenn Berman is a psychotherapist and sports psychology consultant. She regularly appears on television and radio as an expert on psychological issues. She has been on 48 Hours, NBC News, The Other Half, and many more. For questions, comments, or advice to be used in one of her columns, she can be reached through her website at [www.DoctorJenn.com](http://www.DoctorJenn.com).

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