

What is asthma

Asthma is a common long-term condition that can be well controlled in most children. The severity of asthma symptoms varies between children, from very mild to more severe.



If your child has asthma, the airways of their lungs are more sensitive than normal. When your child comes into contact with something that irritates their lungs, known as a trigger, their airways become narrow, the lining becomes inflamed, the muscles around them tighten, and there is an increase in the production of sticky mucus or phlegm. This makes it difficult to breathe and causes wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath and can make the chest feel tight.

A sudden, severe onset of symptoms is known as an asthma attack, or an acute asthma exacerbation. Asthma attacks can sometimes be managed at home but may require hospital treatment. They are occasionally life threatening.

The common symptoms of asthma include:

- Feeling breathless
- Wheezing (there may be a whistling sound when your child breathes)
- Coughing, particularly at night
- Tightness in the chest

Symptoms vary between people and children may have one or more of these symptoms. If symptoms become worse during the night or with exercise, your child's asthma may not be well controlled. Take your child to see their doctor or asthma nurse.



When symptoms of asthma get significantly worse, this may be the start of an asthma attack. The symptoms of a severe asthma attack sometimes develop slowly, taking 6-48 hours to become serious. For some people, asthma can get worse very quickly. Be aware of any signs of worsening asthma in your child.

These may include:

- An increase in symptoms, such as your child becoming more wheezy, tight chested or breathless
- The reliever inhaler (usually blue) not helping as much as usual
- A drop in peak expiratory flow rate

if you notice your child's symptoms are getting worse, do not ignore them. Contact your GP or asthma clinic.



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

Personal asthma action plan

As part of the initial assessment, you and your child should be encouraged to draw up a personal asthma action plan with your GP or asthma nurse. The plan includes information about your child's asthma medicines. If your child has been admitted to hospital because of an asthma attack, you should be offered a written action plan (or the opportunity to review an existing action plan) before you go home.

As your child gets older, it is important for them to be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of their asthma, and how to effectively manage their condition. Both you and your child should be shown how to recognise when their symptoms are getting worse and the appropriate steps to take. You should also be given information about what to do if they have an asthma attack.

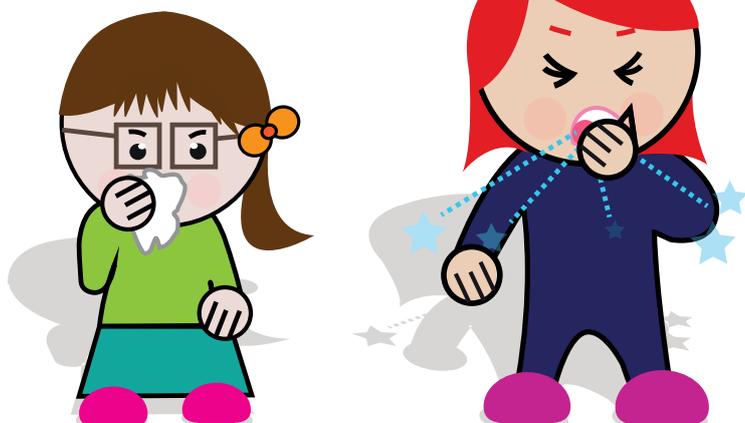
You and your child should review their personal asthma action plan with their GP or asthma nurse at least once a year, more frequently if their symptoms are severe or not well controlled.

As part of their asthma management, your child may be given a diary card and sometimes a peak flow meter to monitor their symptoms and the effects of treatment.

What is good asthma care?

The aim of treatment is to get your child's asthma under control and keep it that way. Asthma treatments are effective in most children and should allow them to be free from symptoms and lead a normal life.

Your doctor or nurse will tailor your child's asthma treatment according to their symptoms. Sometimes, your child may need to be on higher levels of medication than at other times.



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Choose the right care

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- You have the correct inhalers and any other medication you need
- Your child's symptoms stop getting worse or begin to get better
- You have a personal asthma action plan to follow that says home care is the best treatment for your child's symptoms



Choose your GP surgery if...

- Your child has only just been diagnosed with asthma – you'll be offered care at your GP surgery from doctors and nurses trained in asthma management
- You need advice about the risks to you and your children with asthma if you smoke, as well as support to stop smoking
- Your child needs vaccinations to reduce respiratory infections, such as flu
- You need a written personal asthma action plan agreed with your child's doctor or nurse



Call 999 A&E if...

- Your child is breathing faster than usual & using their tummy or neck muscles to breathe
- Your child is too breathless to speak in sentences
- Your child is too breathless to feed
- Your child looks tired or pale or blue around the nose, mouth or fingernails

Whilst waiting for the ambulance to arrive give your child 10 puffs (1 puff every 30 seconds) of their reliever inhaler (usually BLUE) using your spacer if you have one. You can then continue to give 1 puff every minute until the ambulance arrives.



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