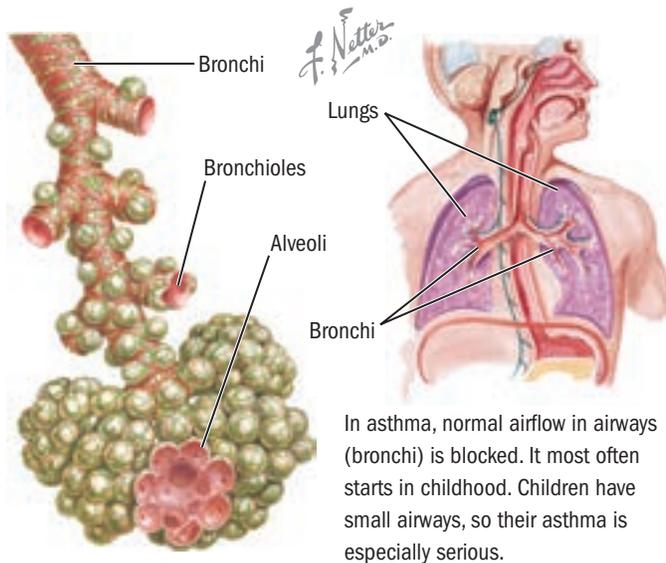
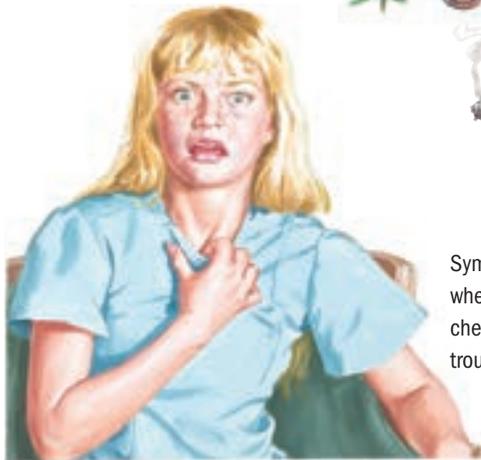


CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH ASTHMA



In asthma, normal airflow in airways (bronchi) is blocked. It most often starts in childhood. Children have small airways, so their asthma is especially serious.

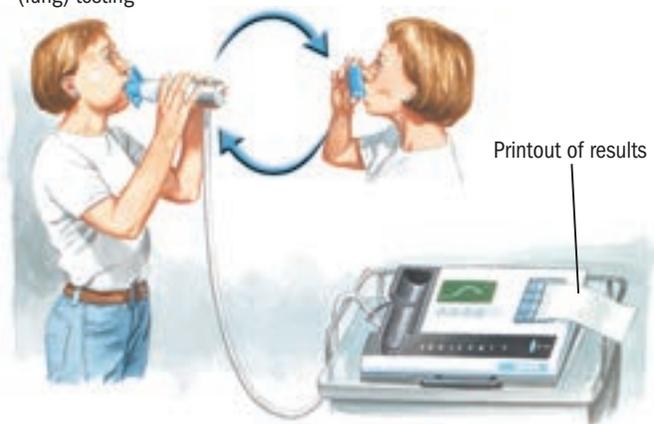
Asthma attacks may be caused by pollen, dust, dander, smoke, cold weather, flu, and stress.



Symptoms include wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and trouble breathing.

Automated pulmonary (lung) testing

Testing is done before and after breathing in a short-acting drug that dilates bronchi.



For children younger than 3, doctors may use a wait-and-see approach.

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease in which normal airflow in airways is blocked. Airways are breathing tubes taking air into and out of lungs. In asthma, airway cells produce more mucus, which becomes thicker and more sticky. Airways clog up and become inflamed, swollen and very small.

Asthma most often starts in childhood. About 6 million children have it. Children have small airways, so their asthma can be especially serious.

What Causes Asthma?

Early-onset asthma (extrinsic, or allergic, asthma) has both genetic and environmental causes. Among these are allergens (molds, pollens, animals), irritants (tobacco smoke, air pollution), weather (cold air), exercise, and infections (flu, colds). Asthma runs in families. Emotional stress may cause asthma attacks.

What Are the Symptoms of Asthma?

Symptoms vary from child to child. They include wheezing (a whistling sound during breathing), coughing, chest tightness, and trouble breathing, especially in early morning or at night.

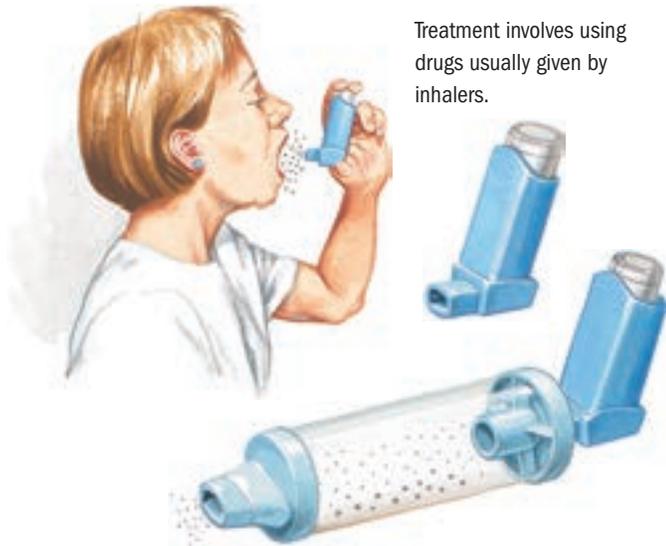
How Is Asthma Diagnosed?

The health care provider checks symptoms, does a physical examination, and may test lung function, blood, and skin sensitivity. Lung (pulmonary) function tests (spirometry) can tell whether breathing is normal and how sensitive the airways are. However, these tests aren't accurate before age 6. For children younger than 3, doctors may use a "wait-and-see" approach.

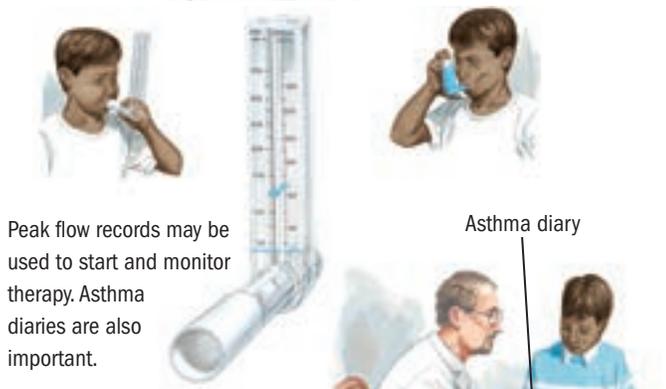
How Is Asthma Treated?

Asthma can be mild irregular (intermittent) (i.e., symptoms less than two times per week). It can be mild long-lasting (persistent), with symptoms more than two times per week but less than once daily. It can be moderate persistent (daily symptoms) or severe persistent (constant symptoms). Treatment depends on asthma's severity and involves preventing symptoms and treating attacks.

Preventive anti-inflammatory drugs are taken daily for long periods. Long-term treatment involves corticosteroids given in inhalers or pills to reduce lung inflammation. These drugs are for mild, moderate, and severe persistent asthma. Quick-relief



Treatment involves using medicines usually given by inhalers.



Peak flow records may be used to start and monitor therapy. Asthma diaries are also important.

Asthma diary

Lifestyle and home remedies are important to control asthma. Use air conditioners. Keep indoor air clean. Use HEPA filters. Avoid cigarette smoke and pet dander.



Encourage regular exercise.

medicines are for symptomatic treatment. Short-acting bronchodilators, often given by inhalers, quickly open swollen airways. Long-acting drugs in inhalers are used every 12 hours. Immunotherapy may help children with allergic asthma that can't be controlled by avoiding triggers.

Older children and teens may use small, hand-held devices called pressurized metered-dose inhalers (MDIs) or inhalers that release a fine powder. Babies and toddlers must use face masks attached to MDIs or nebulizers. A plastic tube device called a "spacer" should always be used with MDI's.

Lifestyle and home remedies are important for asthma control. Alternative treatments that may help include breathing techniques, acupuncture, and relaxation.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Asthma:

- ✓ **DO** have your child always carry an inhaler.
- ✓ **DO** always use a spacer with an inhaler to take your asthma medicine.
- ✓ **DO** make sure that your child maintains a healthy weight.
- ✓ **DO** encourage regular exercise.
- ✓ **DO** reduce dust mites in your house, e.g., by getting rid of carpets and using special (HEPA) filters. Clean regularly.
- ✓ **DO** reduce pet dander by avoiding pets with fur or feathers or by regular bathing or grooming.
- ✓ **DO** review an asthma care plan with your health care provider at least once per year.
- ✓ **DO** call the health care provider if medicines don't control the asthma or have side effects.
- ✓ **DO** avoid triggers such as cold air and smoke. Maintain low humidity. Use the air conditioner and keep indoor air clean.
- ✓ **DO** learn the symptoms of an asthma flare so you can start treatment at the earliest signs.
- ⊗ **DON'T** give your child over-the-counter medicines unless your health care provider says you can.
- ⊗ **DON'T** let your child come into contact with asthma triggers. Asthma may be related to cigarette smoke exposure.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics
Tel: (847) 434-4000
Website: <http://www.aap.org>
- American Lung Association
Tel: (800) LUNG-USA
Website: <http://www.lungusa.org>
- National Lung Health Education Program
Tel: (303) 839-6755
Website: <http://www.nlhep.org>

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