

UNDERSTANDING ASTHMA

Guidance for Parents

Asthma is a long-term chronic condition that affects adults and children alike.

With these figures in mind, it's important for parents to be able to recognise the signs of an allergic reaction and know how to respond if their child experiences one.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic, long-term condition that causes the inside walls of the lungs' airways to become inflamed, narrow, and swell up, often producing excess mucus. This can make breathing difficult, causing coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

For some people, asthma symptoms may be mild, but for others it can be a major problem that interferes with daily life and may lead to a life-threatening asthma attack.

Symptoms of asthma include:

- A persistent, dry cough
- Wheezing (a whistling noise when breathing out)
- A feeling of shortness of breath
- A feeling of chest tightness or 'squeezing' in the chest
- Trouble falling asleep due to wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath
- Coughing or wheezing attacks
- Younger children may say their tummy is sore

Good to know:

For some, asthma symptoms can worsen in certain situations:

- **Exercise-induced asthma:** symptoms may flare up during physical activity, particularly in cold, dry air.
- **Environmental asthma:** triggered by irritants such as chemical fumes, gases, or dust.
- **Allergy-induced asthma:** caused by airborne allergens like pollen, mould spores, cockroach droppings, or pet dander.

Is there a cure for asthma?

Asthma is often a life-long condition, although young children sometimes outgrow it by the time they're teenagers or adults.

While there's no cure for asthma, working with your GP or asthma nurse will help you find the medicines that suit your child best. Building good routines, like taking treatments as prescribed, makes a big difference in managing symptoms

Common asthma triggers

- Respiratory infections, such as colds and flu
- Hay fever and pollen
- Dry wind, cold air, or sudden changes in weather or temperature
- Indoor air pollution and allergies, like damp and mould, dust mites and cleaning products
- Outdoor air pollution
- Exercise and physical activity
- Pets
- Strong emotions
- Stress

Your child may have one trigger or lots of triggers. Everyone has different triggers, so what triggers your child's asthma might not affect someone else.



Supporting your child

Schools do not diagnose asthma but can work with you and healthcare professionals to create an Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) for your child.

With good asthma management, most children can run around, play, and join in everyday activities alongside their friends.

