



Asthma

It is often difficult, especially in young children, to be entirely certain that asthma is the diagnosis. After a careful physical examination, your pediatrician will need to ask you specific questions about your child's health. The information you give your pediatrician will help determine if your child has asthma. Your pediatrician will need information about

- Your child's symptoms, such as wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath
- What triggers the symptoms or when the symptoms get worse
- Medications that were tried and if they helped
- Any family history of allergies or asthma

Some children do not find relief from their symptoms even after using medications. If that is your child, your pediatrician may want to test your child for other conditions that can make asthma worse. These conditions include allergic rhinitis, sinusitis and gastroesophageal reflux disease.

It is important to remember that asthma is a complicated disease to diagnose, and the results of airway function testing may be normal even if your child has asthma. Also keep in mind that not all children with repeated episodes of wheezing have asthma. Some children are born with small lungs, and their air passages may get blocked by infections. As their lungs grow they no longer wheeze after an infection. This type of wheezing usually occurs in children without a family history of asthma and in children whose mothers smoked during pregnancy.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease of the tubes that carry air to the lungs. These airways become narrow and their linings become swollen, irritated, and inflamed. In patients with asthma, the airways are always irritated and inflamed, even though symptoms are not always present. The degree and severity of airway inflammation varies over time.

Children with asthma can have symptoms start or worsen when they are exposed to many indoor substances such as

- Dust and dust mites
- Cockroaches
- Animals such as cats and dogs

- Molds
- Secondhand cigarette smoke

Children with asthma may also be sensitive to colds and other viral infections, cold air, and particles or chemicals in the air. Ongoing exposures to these substances will not only worsen asthma symptoms, but also continue to aggravate airway inflammation.

How is Asthma Treated?

Any child who has asthma symptoms more than twice per week should be treated. One of the most important treatments of asthma is to control the underlying inflammation of the airways. This can be done with medications or by avoiding environmental factors that cause or aggravate airway inflammation.

Knowing the causes and triggers for asthma can allow families to reduce or avoid these triggers and reduce ongoing airway inflammation and hyper-reactivity. This can reduce the severity and frequency of asthma symptoms and, hopefully, the need for as much asthma medication.

Sources

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/allergies-asthma/Pages/default.aspx>