



Asthma Basics

What is asthma?

- Asthma is an inflammatory lung disease that is common in both children and adults. Asthma is a chronic disease* (long-term). It often runs in families, especially those with eczema, allergies or asthma.
- Having asthma causes:
 - airway muscles to tighten.
 - increased inflammation and swelling in the airways.
 - a build-up of mucus.
 - airways to become swollen, tight, and narrow making it hard to breathe.

What are symptoms of asthma?

- Symptoms of asthma are what your child feels when the airways are swollen and narrow.
- Common symptoms:
 - coughing (often worse at night)
 - chest tightness
 - wheezing
 - symptoms with exercise (coughing or difficulty breathing)

Your child may have more asthma symptoms when sick with a respiratory illness (ex: common cold) or when exposed to something in the environment that triggers his/her asthma. **These more severe episodes are called asthma flare-ups***. You will have to adjust your child's asthma medicines during these times and may need to see your child's doctor to help manage these flare-ups.

There are 2 main types of asthma: Persistent Asthma and Intermittent Asthma

Persistent Asthma: Children have more frequent symptoms and asthma flare-ups. This is caused by increased airway inflammation (swelling) and narrowing that is present every day.

Intermittent Asthma: Children have few symptoms because they only have rare times of airway swelling and narrowing.

Less airway swelling and narrowing = fewer symptoms and better asthma control

All * throughout this book indicate to see glossary (page 12).

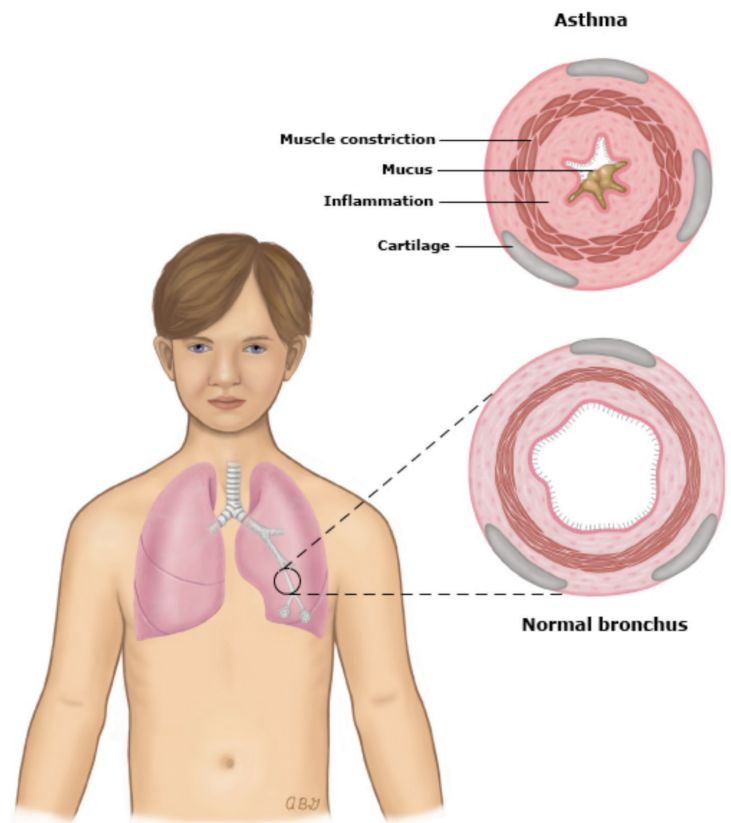
What type of asthma does my child have?

- Your child's doctor can diagnose your child with intermittent or persistent asthma based on your child's symptoms, how frequent they are, and how often your child is having flare-ups.
- Some doctors will also perform spirometry* (a breathing test) to help with the diagnosis.
- Having this diagnosis helps guide which medicines are right for your child.

What is the goal of asthma treatment?

- The goal of asthma treatment is to decrease airway swelling and narrowing so that your child has fewer symptoms and flare-ups.
- There is no cure for asthma, but there are great ways to control it.

Asthma



When asthma flares, the muscles around the airways tighten (constrict), and the lining of airways get inflamed. Then mucus builds up. All of this makes it hard to breathe.

UpToDate

What are the key steps to reach this goal?

- Your child should have regular visits (every 3-6 months) with their doctor to guide treatment and medicine choices. This is needed because asthma is a chronic disease that changes over time and your child's medicines may need to be increased or decreased.
- Working with your child's doctor to learn your child's asthma triggers (things that cause increased asthma symptoms) and learning how to avoid them.

What does well-controlled asthma look like?

Well-controlled asthma means your child is:

- symptom-free most of the time and not needing frequent quick-relief medicine.
- able to exercise and play like other children.
- sleeping through the night.
- not missing school or work due to frequent asthma flare-ups.