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:
  o airway muscles to tighten
  o inflammation increases and causes swelling in the airways
  o mucus builds up

Airways 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:
  o coughing (often worse at night)
  o chest tightness
  o wheezing
  o 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 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
What type of asthma does my child have?

• Your 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 children have fewer symptoms and flare-ups.
• There is no cure for asthma, but there are great ways to control it.

What are the key steps to reach this goal?

• You should have regular visits (every 3-6 months) with your 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 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.
• is able to exercise and play like other children.
• sleeping through the night.
• not missing school or work due to frequent asthma flare-ups.