



ASTHMA PATIENT INFORMATION



Q: What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that causes episodes of difficult breathing. Asthma symptoms are caused primarily due to constriction, tightening of the muscles surrounding the airways, and inflammation, soreness, swelling and irritation of the airways in the lungs.

Q.What causes Asthma?

The exact cause of Asthma is not know. Research shows that there may be a combination of factors that interact to cause Asthma to develop, most often early in life.

These factors include:

- A tendency to develop allergies
- A family history of Asthma
- Certain respiratory infections during childhood
- Exposure to airborne irritants e.g. tobacco smoke, dog and cat hair

Different factors may be more likely to cause asthma in some people than in others.

Q.Signs and Symptoms of Asthma?

Common asthma symptoms include:

- Coughing – this is often worse at night or early in the morning
- Wheezing – Wheezing is whistling or squeaking sounds that occurs when your breathe
- Chest Tightness – This may feel like something is squeezing or sitting on your chest
- Shortness of Breath – Some people who have Asthma say they cannot catch their breath or they feel out of breath

Q: How is Asthma Diagnosed?

Your GP will diagnose Asthma based on your medical history a physical examination and results from tests. Your GP will work out your level of Asthma severity and this will determine what treatment you will start on.

At time of diagnosis you may have had:

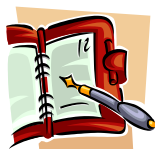
- A spirometry breathing test(this is done at the surgery with the practice nurse, this test assesses the function of your lungs, it involves blowing in to a mouth piece several times, the machine records this and gives a result which can help your GP reach a diagnosis.
- Been asked to keep a diary of your symptoms and record your peak flow (this is a short breathing test you can do at home , which involves blowing hard into a small plastic tube called a peak flow meter)
- Allergy Testing
- A chest x-ray to check your lungs

Q. What can I expect at the practice?

- You will be invited to come along and see the Asthma Nurse on a yearly basis, your appointment will last approximately 20 minutes.
- You will also be asked to bring along your asthma medication e.g. your inhalers and any other spacer devices your might have. The nurse will check your inhalers and how you are using them.
- The nurse will also check your peak flow measurements and ask about your asthma symptoms.
- Your may also be weighed and asked about your lifestyle choices and your smoking status.
- Discussion between the nurse and the GP will be take place at this time if any medications need reviewed or changed.

Q.What can I do to help control my Asthma?

- Learn about your asthma and how to control it.
- Follow your written Asthma plan
- Use medications as directed
- Keep track of your asthma symptoms
- Identify and avoid things that make your Asthma worse
- Get regular check-ups
- If you feel that your Asthma is well controlled it is still important to come for checks.
- Annual flu vaccine may be recommended for some patients with asthma
- If it is difficult for your to attend the clinics in person a telephone consultation with the Asthma nurse can be arranged.



Q. Where can I find more information?

Please feel free to ask your GP or nurse if you have any questions.

There are also a number of helpful resources:

Asthma UK Website

www.asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Publications

info@asthma.org.uk

Asthma UK Advice Line

www.asthma.org.uk/advicelin



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