

Patient information from BMJ

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How can I tell when my child's asthma is getting out of control?

You should see your doctor if any of the following is true:

- Your child is waking up at night more than usual with asthma symptoms
- The inhaler you use to treat your child's symptoms quickly (the reliever) doesn't help their breathing for very long, or doesn't help at all, or you are using it more often
- Your child can't breathe out as much air as usual, as indicated by their PEFR meter (PEFR is short for peak expiratory flow rate). Doctors sometimes recommend that older children use these meters at home to regularly check their breathing.

You should seek emergency treatment if:

- It's hard for your child to talk because of asthma
- Your child cannot eat or drink because of asthma
- Your child is breathing very quickly
- Your child's neck muscles are straining and moving quickly
- Your child's heartbeat or pulse is very fast
- Your child finds it hard to walk
- Your child's lips or fingernails turn gray or blue
- Your child is exhausted for no apparent reason
- Your child seems agitated or confused and is losing consciousness (blacking out).

Your child's doctor, or a nurse with special training in asthma, should regularly check that your child's asthma is under control. They may ask you these types of questions about your child's symptoms:

- Has your child had difficulty sleeping because of their asthma symptoms (including coughing)?
- Has your child had any symptoms during the day (coughing, wheezing, chest tightness, or breathlessness)?

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- Has your child's asthma stopped any activities (such as going to school)?

Depending on your answers, they may decide to change your child's treatment.

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