



What you need to know about...

Diagnosing Asthma in Infants

The most common cause of asthma-like symptoms in a child under 3 years old is an upper respiratory infection. Often this can be a cold or the flu.

But sometimes these symptoms can be the first signs of asthma. The information you share with your healthcare provider is important in getting the right diagnosis and treatment for your infant.



It is hard to diagnose asthma in an infant because many respiratory illnesses appear to be the same.

Your healthcare provider relies on the history you provide and the symptoms they see.

- **Medical history:** Report any family history of asthma, lung disease, allergies; frequent colds; eczema (dry patches of skin); emergency room visits or hospitalizations for breathing problems; premature or low birth weight
- **Symptoms:** Report any cough, wheeze, unusual breathing pattern, or nasal flaring. Describe when the symptoms happen, how often they occur, how long they last, and what makes them better or worse
- **Physical exam:** Your healthcare provider will listen to the infant's chest for unusual breath sounds. They will also check the nose and mouth to look for mucus, and look at the skin for signs of allergies.

What are the most common symptoms of asthma?

The signs and symptoms of asthma can be different for each child. Report any of the following:

- Wheezing
- Cough which may be worse at night
- Shortness of breath
- Tired and weak
- Change in breathing, too slow or fast
- Nasal flaring
- Retractions (skin by ribs suck in)
- Swollen belly
- Trouble sleeping

Who is most likely to have asthma?

Asthma is likely to occur in a child with a family history of asthma and/or allergies. An infant who has had frequent respiratory infections, eczema (dry patches of skin) or had a low birth weight is also more likely to have asthma.

How is asthma diagnosed?

How is asthma treated?

If you are told your infant has asthma, you will be given medications to use to open their airways. It is important to follow the directions closely and ask questions. Always let your healthcare provider know how the treatment is working and any side effects or changes in their symptoms or breathing you notice. Changes in the treatment plan can be made to prevent asthma episodes from occurring or getting worse.