

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic condition which may be caused by narrowing and swelling of the airways. This condition may result in increased production of mucus which can make it more difficult for someone to breathe. Difficulty breathing can trigger coughing, a whistling sound (wheezing) when you breathe out, and shortness of breath. In childhood, asthma often starts before age 5. There is no clear cause for asthma, but genetics and environmental factors may play a role in the onset of childhood asthma. Although asthma can be minor for some children, it can also impact daily life activities and can lead to a life-threatening asthma attack. Asthma is a condition that can change throughout a child's life, which is why communication with healthcare providers is important to manage symptoms and adjust treatment if needed. Asthma is a condition that has no cure, but symptoms can be managed to prevent more serious complications. Symptoms of asthma include, shortness of breath, tightening of the chest or pain, wheezing when exhaling, trouble sleeping caused by shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing, and coughing or wheezing attacks that are worsened by a respiratory virus, such as a cold or the flu. Individuals who suffer from asthma are encouraged to seek medical attention if symptoms increase, increased difficulty breathing, which can be measured using a peak flow meter to see how well the lungs are working, and the need to use a quick-relief inhaler more often. Some individuals may suffer from asthma based on daily activities, including exercise-induced asthma, occupational asthma, and allergy-induced asthma. Acute asthma attacks can be treated with the use of rescue inhalers, while more severe cases may require a more long-acting inhaler and/or oral steroids. Asthma is a condition that can change rapidly, which is why caregivers should contact medical professionals if their child displays rapid worsening of shortness of breath or wheezing, no improvement even after using a quick-relief inhaler, and shortness of breath when they are doing minimal physical activity.