



How is asthma diagnosed?

There is no simple test to diagnose asthma in children. It is often difficult to diagnose in young children. Your child's physician will ask you specific questions about your child's history and will then do a thorough physical exam

What you tell the doctor can help determine if your child has asthma. Pertinent questions include:

- Does your child have any symptoms such as wheezing, cough or feeling short of breath?
- How often do these symptoms occur and how serious are the symptoms? Do they cause your child to miss school or have to sit out from sports? Does coughing keep your child up at night?
- What seems to trigger the symptoms or worsen them? (Common triggers are infections, exercise, smoke, allergens or stress)
- Is there a history of chronic or frequent runny nose or skin rashes?
- Have any medications been tried? If so, has anything helped?
- Is there a family history of asthma or allergies?

Sometimes a breathing test called spirometry may need to be used to assess how well our child's lungs work. This test can be done in office for children over 5 or 6 years old. Please review a separate handout called **Spirometry: What to Expect** if your physician has discussed spirometry testing. The spirometer measures the amount of air the child can exhale and how quickly. It is often helpful to do these measurements before and after an inhalation of asthma medication to assess the response to the medication.

If your child's symptoms do not resolve with medications, tests may need to be done to check for other conditions that can make asthma worse or that can masquerade as asthma. Some conditions that can do this are gastroesophageal reflux, vocal cord dysfunction, sinusitis, and even allergic rhinitis.

Asthma can sometimes be tricky to diagnose, and sometimes lung function testing can be normal even in children with asthma. For some children, the tendency to wheeze with colds or other triggers goes away as they grow older.