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# Quick Reference Guide to Understanding Your Child's **Asthma Care**

Asthma is a chronic condition that narrows airways and can make it hard to breathe. There is no cure but it can be controlled.

That's where we come in.

This handy-dandy fact sheet will help you work with your child's healthcare provider to get asthma under control and keep it that way. You'll know it's controlled when there are no more regular symptoms, like wheezing, coughing or tightness in the chest. We'll also share what high-quality asthma care looks like for children under the age of 16 so you know what you should expect based on the Ontario Health Asthma Quality Standards.

## Let's get started:

### First, if you think your child has asthma, get tested

If your child has symptoms like shortness of breath, tightness in their chest, wheezing or coughing, go see their healthcare provider. You need to know if it's asthma or if there is something else going on. It could save their life.

For children younger than six-years-old, they may not be able to do a lung function test. To diagnose asthma, the healthcare provider will check breathing and symptoms. Medication may be prescribed to see if it helps.

For children over the age of six, lung function tests may be given. Ask if your child should have a specific breathing test called spirometry – it's the preferred test to check for asthma..

### Children with asthma should be checked every year

Annual check-ups will show if your child's asthma is changing and if it's in control. If your child has regular symptoms, a severe flare-up or a medication change, they will need to go more often.

The healthcare provider will ask about your child's symptoms, what makes their asthma worse, medication and anything else that affects how they feel. Keep track of these details between appointments so you don't have to rely on memory.





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## Medication depends on how controlled your child's asthma is

There are many types of asthma medication. For example, some puffers can control symptoms if used regularly and triggers are avoided. Your healthcare provider will work with you and your child to decide what medication will work best, as well as when and how to use it. Ensure it's taken as prescribed to stay in control. If flare-ups keep coming, you will need to work with their healthcare provider on different doses or different medication.

Your child should always have quick access to their rescue inhaler. Literally, always. Older children may be able to carry their rescue inhaler with them. Be sure to talk about your child's asthma with their teachers, school, daycare or other educators and caregivers so they can provide support when you're not around.

## Learn how to manage asthma and use an Asthma Action Plan

Your healthcare provider will teach how to control asthma but ultimately it's up to you and your child. To set up for success, work together with your healthcare provider on an Asthma Action Plan that lists medication, how to take it, things your child can do to stay healthy and what to do if symptoms flare up. You can also ask about being referred to an asthma education program.

## Specialized care may be needed

If despite taking medication and avoiding triggers your child still has symptoms, or if their healthcare provider has other concerns, there may be a referral to someone who specializes in asthma care for children.

## If your child went to the hospital for asthma, they need follow-up care

A healthcare provider should follow up within two-to-seven days if your child went to the ER or was hospitalized because of asthma. They'll check to see how your child is doing, review medication and check the Asthma Action Plan for any needed changes. Follow-up may come from your child's healthcare provider, an asthma specialist or another healthcare professional qualified to help. Ask questions so you know what caused the flare-up, details of your child's care and how to prevent it in future.

## Great, tell me more

Visit [lunghealth.ca](http://lunghealth.ca) for more asthma information and resources, including a free Asthma Action Plan download.

If you prefer to talk to a human, call our certified respiratory educators at **1-888-344-5864**. It's free. They're also available via email at [info@lunghealth.ca](mailto:info@lunghealth.ca) or for an online chat at [lunghealth.ca](http://lunghealth.ca).

Reference: Ontario Health quality standards  
Asthma Care in the Community for People Under 16 Years of Age (2020)

The Lung Health Foundation is the leading national charity dedicated to improving the lung health of Canadians.

We are ending gaps in the prevention, diagnosis and care of lung disease. We also advocate for patients, fund life-saving research and provide trustworthy information to help Canadians breathe better, regardless of income or location.