

Asthma

Respiratory Services
Cobequid Community
Health Centre
Room 2306
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Lower Sackville, NS
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- › Phone: 902-869-6140
- › Fax: 902-865-6073

What is asthma?

- Asthma is inflammation (irritation, reddening, and swelling) of the airways (breathing passages) in the lungs. This makes it hard for air to flow in and out of the lungs.
- If you have asthma, you may have trouble breathing when you are around triggers. Triggers are things that make inflammation worse (like dust or animals).
- When the airways become inflamed, they may produce more mucus than usual. The more inflammation there is, the more sensitive the airway becomes. This can cause more symptoms.
- If the inflammation is not treated, the muscles around the airways become sensitive and start to twitch and tighten.
- The airways may then get narrow, making it hard for air to pass in and out of the lungs.

How is asthma diagnosed?

- Asthma is diagnosed by doing a physical exam and taking a history of your symptoms (like shortness of breath, chest tightness, wheezing, and coughing).
- You will also have a simple breathing test called spirometry.
- Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or respirologist (doctor who specializes in lung disease) can order a spirometry test.

How is asthma managed?

Managing your asthma can include:

- › Avoiding triggers
- › Reliever medication (treats the tightening of the airways)
- › Controller medication (treats the inflammation of the airways)


To get started:

- Ask your primary health care provider to fill out a referral form and mail (see address on front cover) or fax it to Respiratory Services:
 - › Fax: 902-865-6073
- We will call you with an appointment time.
- You can also call Respiratory Services and make an appointment yourself:
 - › Phone: 902-869-6140

Asthma education

The goal of asthma education is better asthma control over time.

Asthma control means:

- › No asthma attacks
 - › Few, mild daytime symptoms (less than 4 days a week)
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- › No nighttime symptoms
- › Using reliever medication less than 4 times a week
- › Not missing school or work because of your asthma
- › Normal breathing test
- › Regular physical activity

In the asthma education sessions, you will:

- › Find your triggers
- › Learn how to manage your asthma
- › Learn about your medication(s) and how to take it
- › Learn how to prevent unplanned doctor and hospital visits. This is called your Asthma Action Plan.
- › Be able to ask any questions you have about your asthma

What are your questions?
Please ask.
We are here to help you.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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