

2019

# Asthma

Respiratory Services  
Cobequid Community  
Health Centre

Phone: 902-869-6140

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[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition where the airways (breathing passages) of the lungs are inflamed (irritated, reddened, and swollen). People with asthma often have trouble breathing when they are around “triggers”. Triggers are things that make the inflammation worse, such as dust or animals. Asthma makes it hard for air to flow in and out of the lungs. This happens because of one or both of the following:

- The lining of the airways becomes inflamed, and may produce more mucus than usual. The more inflammation there is, the more sensitive the airway becomes, which can cause more symptoms.
- The muscles that surround the airways become sensitive and start to twitch and tighten. This usually happens if the inflammation is not treated.

These factors cause the airways to narrow, making it hard for air to pass in and out of the lungs.

## **How is asthma diagnosed?**

Asthma is diagnosed by:

- Taking a history of your typical symptoms including episodes of shortness of breath, chest tightness, wheezing, and coughing.
- Spirometry (a simple breathing test).

## **Goal of asthma management**


The goal of asthma management is to have better asthma control over time. Asthma control means:

- No asthma attacks.
- Few, mild daytime symptoms (e.g., less than 4 days a week).
- No nighttime symptoms.
- Using reliever medication less than 4 times a week.
- Not missing school or work due to asthma.
- Normal breathing tests.
- Normal physical activity.

## **Asthma education**

Information about your condition will help you and your family manage your asthma. You will get knowledge and skills to manage your asthma so that you can enjoy a life free of symptoms and be as active as you want to be.

### **Sessions include:**

- Identifying personal triggers.
  - Answering any questions you have about asthma.
  - Information about medications and how to take them.
  - How to manage your asthma.
  - How to prevent unplanned doctor and hospital visits (your Asthma Action Plan).
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## **Asthma treatment**

Asthma treatment includes:

- › reliever medication
- › controller medication
- › avoiding triggers
- › education

## **How do I get started?**

- Ask your family health care provider to fill in a referral form and mail or fax it to Respiratory Services (see back page). We will call you with an appointment time.
- You can also call Respiratory Services and make an appointment yourself.
- If you would like more information about asthma education, please call the Respiratory Educator (see back page).

# Respiratory Educator

Respiratory Services

Cobequid Community

Health Centre

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## Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:

<http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources. For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:

Call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community:

Call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.