

BTS, NICE and SIGN Asthma: diagnosis, monitoring and chronic asthma management

Information for the public

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www.nice.org.uk

Asthma: the care you should expect

Asthma is a common lung condition that affects the airways and can cause serious breathing difficulties. It often starts in childhood. Once asthma is diagnosed it does not have to limit people's lives. Although there is no cure, there are lots of treatments to keep symptoms under control. Finding a treatment that works well and learning how to manage it takes the right support and advice.

We want this guideline to make a difference to children, young people and adults with asthma by making sure:

- Your doctors offer you tests to confirm your asthma as early as possible. These may include measuring your lung function, a blood test to check for levels of eosinophils (a type of white blood cell), and a skin allergy test. These tests will make diagnosis more accurate.
- If you are newly diagnosed, your doctors offer you a combination inhaler that contains a preventer and long-acting reliever. Or you might be offered a combination inhaler that also contains a medicine for fast-acting symptom relief (maintenance and reliever therapy, called MART). This depends on your age and your ability to use the inhalers. You might also be offered MART if you already have asthma. Using these inhalers means you should have better treatment and need to use fewer inhalers.
- You know how to take your asthma medicines and what to do if they are not working. You also get regular support to make sure you're using your medicines correctly, for example checking your inhaler technique (see the section on where can I find out more?)
- You can take control of your care by having your own asthma care plan and help to use it. And you are helped to reduce the amount of medicine you are taking when your asthma is well controlled, so that you are not taking medicine that you don't need.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your health professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What are you most worried about – are there aspects of asthma and its treatment that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day to day life?
- Whether there are changes you can make to help control your asthma, such as taking your medicine correctly, stopping smoking or identifying triggers.

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your health professional.

Read more about [NICE information on making decisions about your care](#) and [BTS/SIGN advice on provision of information](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) for England has more information about [asthma](#).

[NHS inform](#) for Scotland has information about [asthma](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Allergy UK](#), 01322 619 898
- [Asthma + Lung UK](#), 0300 222 5800

You can also find information about people's experience of asthma on [healthtalk](#).

BTS, NICE and SIGN are not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#) or [Care Opinion](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by asthma and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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