



Reviewing asthma diagnosis in children

Many children suffer from lower respiratory symptoms in early childhood. For some, this will be asthma, but for many, they have had a complex post-viral illness, often associated with Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), resulting in intermittent symptoms of cough, wheeze and breathlessness.

Long-term cohort studies would suggest that such children present earlier, and that their symptoms resolve during the second five years of their lives. It is important not to label children as asthmatic if they do not indeed have a formal diagnosis of asthma. Young adults with an erroneous label of childhood asthma may find that their career options are inappropriately limited as a consequence of an early and inaccurate diagnosis of asthma.

There is also a group of children with persisting respiratory symptoms in whom the likelihood of asthma is lower. These children need reassessment, often by paediatricians with a special interest in respiratory disease.

Asthma is a variable disease, and sudden acute deterioration is possible at any time. Should this happen, first responders need to be aware that the child has been treated for asthma in the past.

- ✓ Improve asthma care
- ✓ In line with national guidance
- ✓ Improved standards of diagnosis of asthma in children
- ✓ Reduce unnecessary prescribing of inhalers

PCRS-UK Resources:

- PCRS-UK Opinion sheets - Diagnosis of asthma in children, Management of asthma in children, Asthma Action Plans, Asthma in adolescents
- PCRS-UK Quick Guide to the diagnosis and management of asthma in primary care
- PCRJ - Diagnosis of asthma in the under fives
- PCRJ - 2012 and never been KISSed: we need to improve the care of children with asthma

Other Resources:

- BTS/SIGN guideline for the diagnosis and management of asthma August 2013.
- Recommendations for the assessment and management of cough in children. M D Shields, A Bush, M L Everard, *et al.* *Thorax* 2008;63:1-15. doi:10.1136/thx.2007.077370
- Respiratory Problems in Primary Care: A Guide for New GPs (RCGP Curriculum for General Practice Series). - Author: R Booker, M Fletcher, S Gregory & S Holmes

Practice Improvement Worksheets, DRAFT version 01, Date of Expiry December 2015

This series of practice improvement worksheets are intended for members to use within their practice. This is a pilot project, prepared in DRAFT format. Please tell us what you think! We would like feedback on the accuracy, completeness, usefulness and outcomes of the resource. To submit your feedback visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EQUIPIIW>

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