Recognize the Symptoms and Signs of Asthma for Proper Treatment

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Signs of Asthma

Understanding the signs of asthma experienced by you or your child is crucial, as the acute attacks can be life threatening and require medical care as soon as possible. Some symptoms are easily recognized while others are not or happen at night. Let's have a quick review of the signs of asthma and see how acute attacks can be prevented and managed.

Signs and symptoms

Wheezing is the most common symptom of asthma in children and experienced by adults as well. It's a high pitched whistling sound produced by the airflow through the narrowed, inflamed airways. Cough (usually dry) and shortness of breath are also typical symptoms of this condition. In cough variant asthma, cough is the only symptom experienced by the child. Pay attention to other, less suggestive symptoms. For example, your child may feel anxiety or have a panic attack. In other cases, he may complain of an itchy chin right before they experience breathing problems and cough.

Sudden narrowing of the airways (bronchospasm), associated with inflammation and excessive mucus can trigger an acute attack. The breathing difficulties become more severe, with rapid breathing, severe wheezing, persistent dry cough and chest pain. The muscles of the neck and chest become very tight. The face is pale and sweaty, the fingertips and lips develop a bluish color and the child looks anxious and may have a panic attack. The medication does not help, and the symptoms get worse and worse. Overall, the symptoms tend to aggravate at night, and cough becomes more disturbing.

Acute attacks occur differently from one person to another; sometimes weeks and even months can pass by without an attack. Then another flare up can develop all of a sudden, or be triggered by stress, exercise, seasonal allergies, respiratory infections. Tobacco smoke (second hand smoke) is a risk factor for developing asthma, and also an aggravating factor. Younger children may refuse to eat, and become lethargic.

How to prevent asthma attacks

The best way to prevent an attack is to have the asthma well controlled with medication and a healthy lifestyle. Peak flow meters are used to measure breathing changes and should be used as recommended by the physician.

Acute attack management

For adults it's easier to understand when the symptoms are severe, and seek medical attention. If your child has troubles breathing, is constantly coughing, can't talk, eat or play, is vomiting and experiences convulsions when breathing, call 911 right away.

Call the physician immediately if your child doesn't have the symptoms described above, but has problems

breathing and coughing.

Follow the asthma plan recommended by the doctor – use the medications as directed, and seek medical help for acute attacks. If your child doesn’t have an individualized asthma plan, but you have an inhaler bring the child in an upright position, uptight his clothes and give one puff of quick relief inhaler, with a spacer. Ask your child to take four breaths between each puff. Wait four minutes and if you don’t notice any improvement in the symptoms, ask your child to take another four puffs.