

Acute Wheeze Plan for Children

Your child's **reliever inhaler** (usually **blue**) e.g. Salbutamol, should only be used to relieve symptoms as below.

If your child has been given a **preventer inhaler** (usually **brown**), give this at the same time every day eg. Before brushing teeth in morning and evening (important to rinse mouth after use). Don't stop unless directed by a health professional.

We usually advise using a **spacer** with the inhaler.

- Symptoms of cough / wheeze / shortness of breath can start after signs of a 'cold' eg. Runny nose
- The severity of the wheeze can be assessed and managed using the scoring system below

MILD	Mild cough / wheeze, but is able to continue normal day to day activities.	Give 2 - 6 puffs of the reliever inhaler up to every 4 hours as needed. Arrange to see your GP as soon as possible.
MODERATE	Coughing and wheezing more, but they are able to continue their normal activities.	Give up to 6 puffs of the reliever inhaler every 4 hours. Arrange to see your GP as soon as possible. <u>If this is not working / the symptoms return within 4 hours / you are worried about your child/ they are not improving, arrange for urgent medical review (call 999/ attend A&E).</u>
SEVERE	Too breathless to talk, eat or do normal activities OR The blue inhaler is not helping OR your child appears very unwell, drowsy or confused	<u>Give 1 puff of the reliever inhaler every 30 - 60 seconds - up to a total of 10 puffs, and call 999 for an ambulance.</u> <u>If you don't have your reliever inhaler or it's not helping, call 999 straightaway.</u> <u>Whilst waiting for an ambulance, you can use your reliever inhaler every 30 to 60 seconds (up to 10 puffs every 10 minutes)</u>

If 6 puffs of the blue reliever inhaler via a spacer are not lasting 4 hours you need to take emergency action.

After being seen in hospital:

- If you still need to use the reliever inhaler regularly **after 48 hours** from discharge, your child has not fully recovered. Arrange urgent medical review.
- Your child should have a post-attack review with either your GP or asthma nurse **within 2 working days**. This is to make sure your child is improving. Please contact your GP surgery to arrange this.

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Viral-induced Wheeze vs Asthma

Children under the age of 3 years are more likely to be affected due to smaller airways. The wheeze may return each time your child has a 'cold' (caused by a virus), and can last for some days after infection. The reliever inhalers work by 'opening up' the airways.

Viral induced wheeze is different to asthma. Only after the age of 5 years can a diagnosis of asthma be made. Around 1 in 3 children will have at least one episode of acute wheezing before the age of 3 years. Most children will grow out of this and not develop asthma.

Your child should be well in between episodes/ 'colds' with no wheezing. If not, please speak to your health professional.

If your child is experiencing wheeze in response to other triggers, not just 'colds', eg. Pollen, cold, exercise – please seek advice from your healthcare professional. They may suggest a preventer inhaler (steroid) used in asthma, to minimise episodes.

Children with asthma often have dry cough at night-time. If concerned that your child may have asthma, please speak to your medical professional.

Cigarette exposure will make wheezing worse. Please seek support if needed in quitting smoking.

Urgent/Emergency:

Call 111 – urgent advice

Call 999 – in an emergency

More information:

<https://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/professionals/paramedics/safety-netting-documents-parents/viral-induced-wheeze>

<https://www.what0-18.nhs.uk/professionals/gp-primary-care-staff/safety-netting-documents-parents/asthma-acute-exacerbation>

Information/videos on correct inhaler /spacer technique:

<https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/>

More resources:

<https://www.asthma.org.uk>

<https://www.rightbreathe.com>

<https://www.beatasthma.co.uk>

Advice on how to quit smoking:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>

[NHS stop smoking services help you quit NHS \(www.nhs.uk\).](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/)