

Asthma Attacks

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have attended the emergency department following an asthma attack / suspected asthma attack. You have been assessed, and the doctor is happy for you to be discharged from the hospital with arrangements for you to be seen by a specialist.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways – the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. If you have asthma, you have very sensitive airways that become inflamed and tighten when you breathe in anything that irritates your lungs, such as smoke or allergens like pollen. This can cause chest tightness and wheezing, and makes it harder to breathe. You may also get a build-up of mucus, which can also result in more shortness of breath as this can make the tubes narrower.

Anyone can develop asthma. Some people have frequent symptoms and some people are only affected by their asthma when they are exposed to certain triggers. Common triggers are tobacco smoke, a dusty atmosphere and household sprays and products.

What happens next?

The emergency department (ED) will refer you to the specialist asthma clinic, where you will be seen by a specialist asthma nurse as an outpatient. If you do not hear within two weeks of your attendance at the ED, please call the specialist asthma clinic on 01384 456111 ext. 3315.

When you attend your outpatient appointment, it would be helpful if you could bring with you any regular medications that you take, and some peak flow measurements from the time you were discharged from hospital (if you have a peak flow meter at home).

When you are seen by the asthma nurse in the outpatient clinic, they will be able to provide you with further information and answer any questions you have. Until you are seen by the nurse, it is advised that you follow the advice below.

For your safety

- You should take any medication prescribed to you by the emergency department.
- You should continue with your normal medication that you take for your asthma – including your preventer inhaler. By taking your preventer inhaler regularly, you are treating the inflammation in your airways. Preventer inhalers usually contain medication called inhaled steroids, similar to the steroids our bodies produce. Having an extra amount of this in our body in the morning and at night can help control the inflammation and reduce symptoms.
- If you have a reliever inhaler (normally blue) you should use this when you experience wheezing, breathlessness and tightness in your chest. These inhalers contain medication that relaxes the muscles around the tightened airways, allowing the airways to open wider, and this should make it easier to breathe.

These inhalers can be used for up to ten puffs when you are not feeling well.

First Aid during an asthma attack

If you are having an asthma attack, and are experiencing any of the following symptoms;

- Reliever inhaler is not helping or you need it more than every four hours.
- You are finding it difficult to walk or talk.
- You are finding it difficult to breathe.
- You are wheezing a lot, have a very tight chest or you are coughing a lot.

You should;

1. Sit up straight – try to keep calm.
2. Take one puff of your reliever inhaler (usually blue) every 30-60 seconds, up to a maximum of ten puffs.
3. If you feel worse at any point OR you don't feel better after ten puffs, call 999 for an ambulance.
4. Repeat step two after 15 minutes while you are waiting for an ambulance.

Do

- Seek medical advice if you do not feel your asthma is improving (as above).
- Make relatives aware of what to do, according to the above information, in case you are unable to call for an ambulance yourself.
- Sit up and try to stay calm.

- Start steroids if you have a rescue pack at home.
- Loosen any tight clothing round the neck.

Do not

- Lie down, as this could make your breathing worse.

What should I do if I am worried about my condition?

If at any point you are concerned, please make an appointment to see your GP.

References

Asthma UK (asthma.org.uk)

British Lung Foundation (blf.org.uk)

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Specialist asthma clinic: 01384 456111 ext. 3315

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ براہ مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔