

ASTHMA – WHAT IS IT?

(adapted from Community Pediatric Asthma Service
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/icancontrolasthma>)

Asthma has many symptoms. Children with asthma may experience some or all of them. Talk to your pediatrician if you notice:

- coughing in the middle of the night that often wakes you or your child up
- cold symptoms (congestion, coughing, difficulty breathing) that won't go away after a few weeks
- coughing, wheezing, breathlessness or chest tightness after a few minutes of exercise, or during specific times of year ("allergy season")

Asthma makes breathing difficult and often results in coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and tightness in the chest. Here's what happens:

- inhaled triggers cause the lungs to over-react
- the airways in the lungs get inflamed and swollen
- mucous is produced and builds up in the airways
- swelling and mucous may block and narrow the airway
- sometimes the muscles around the airways tighten and squeeze the airways

Asthma may be more likely when:

- other members of your family have asthma, allergies or eczema
- children are exposed to their asthma triggers at home

Check out: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/icancontrolasthma> for more information about what asthma is