

What to Expect If Your Child Needs to Go to Hospital

Most children with asthma don't need to go to hospital, but if your child is having a more serious asthma attack and the blue reliever inhaler doesn't seem to be working well enough, it may be the best place to be.

Arriving in Hospital

Depending on where your local hospital is, you may arrive into the Accident and Emergency department (A&E) or you may go straight to the children's assessment unit. Most hospitals have an area dedicated to just children with toys and someone who is trained in playing with children when they are unwell.

Where ever your child goes, on arrival your child will be triaged. This means a member of staff, usually a nurse, will check your child over and measure things like how fast they are breathing and their temperature. This will help the staff to know how unwell your child is and how quickly they need to be seen. If they are more unwell, they may be given medicine straight away, and may even be moved to an area where there are more staff available to look after your child in a dedicated way.

If your child is not seriously unwell, after triage they may need to wait a while, but will be seen by a doctor. The doctor will ask you questions about your child's asthma and will examine them. The doctor will then be able to decide what will be the best treatment for your child.

Staying in Hospital

Sometimes, the doctor will decide it is best if your child stays in hospital for a period of time. You will be moved to a bed on a ward or in a cubicle. Your child will have 'observations' done at regular intervals. This means they will have things like their breathing rate checked and helps the doctors to decide if your child is responding to the treatment or if more treatments (usually inhalers or nebulisers) need to be given. These observations and treatments usually continue throughout the night but the nurses will try and disturb you and your child as little as possible.

Whilst in hospital, your child will be given menus to choose their meals and will be offered games and activities to stop them getting bored. But remember, being in hospital is about recovering and resting too. As your child starts to get better, the doctors will slowly wean the medicines until they are at a level that is safe to go home.

Going Home

After your child has improved, a decision will be made that they are well enough to go home. Sometimes your child will improve quickly with the medicine they have been given in A&E, and may be able to go home straight from there.

When your child is going home, make sure:

- you understand exactly what to do with your child's medicine, how to safely reduce it and what signs to look out for that may suggest they are getting worse and need another review by a doctor.
- Your child has had a review of their asthma control and you have had an opportunity to talk about any concerns you may have about their asthma
- Your child has had their inhaler technique checked
- Your child has had their asthma management plan updated

After Discharge

Your child should always have a review from their GP 2-7 days after having been seen in hospital to go through their overall asthma control and see if their every day treatment needs to be changed.