Wheeze

Children’s Ward
01625 661080

Macclesfield District
General Hospital

www.eastcheshire.nhs.uk

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Introduction
Your child has had an episode of wheeze. This is very common in young children and many children grow out of it as they get older.

What is wheeze?
A wheeze is the whistling noise that air makes when it is trapped inside the breathing tubes of the lungs.

In many young children you can hear a ‘rattly’ noise. This is not a wheeze as it is the mucus that they are not able to cough away. Lots of people find it difficult to know the difference between this ‘rattly’ noise and wheeze. Wheeze can be heard coming from within the chest whereas a ‘rattle’ comes from the back of the throat.

Why do they wheeze?
Young children have very small breathing tubes in their lungs. When they catch a virus, or something irritates the tubes, they become tighter and leave a smaller airway through which to breathe. The tubes may also become swollen inside and produce mucus. The tightening of the tubes makes it hard for the young child to breathe out. They may also cough to try to get rid of the mucus.

Which children wheeze?
Any child may have episodes of wheeze. The most common cause is when children get a cold, or virus. Following an infection called bronchiolitis (caused by a virus), episodes of wheeze are more likely for some months afterwards.

Children in contact with cigarette smoke are more likely to wheeze.

Can I stop it happening?
You can try to keep your child away from cigarette smoke. You cannot stop them getting a virus and it is not a good idea to try to keep them away from other children.

Does it mean my child will have asthma?
Many children have wheezy episodes in the first few years of life but do not go on to have asthma. However, some young children who wheeze do develop asthma when they get older. We are not sure which children will become asthmatic.
What do I do when my child becomes wheezy?
You may have been given an inhaler for your child. This works by opening up the tight breathing tubes. You can give it to your child when they wheeze or start with a cold. You do not need to give it to your child when they are well.

Inhaled treatment
Name ____________________________________________

_________ puffs (_________ mcgs)_________times a day.

Use this dose regularly for a few days until the symptoms have settled.

Treatment by mouth
Name ____________________ strength _________________ Dose
_________________ times a day _________________

Name of doctor/nurse ________________________________
Signature ____________________date _________________

How to use a inhaler/spacer
1. Settle and seat your child.
2. Shake the inhaler well.
3. Put the inhaler in the end of the spacer.
4. Put the inhaler between the child’s lips and teeth, or place the mask firmly over the nose and mouth.
5. Press the inhaler down once.
6. Count 6 normal breaths in and out (listen for the valve clicking or the valve moving)
7. Remove the device from your child’s mouth or face
8. Repeat the process if required.
For each puff, shake before each dose and leave at least 30 seconds between doses.

It is very important to use the spacer device you have been given for your child, or the inhaled medicine will not reach your child’s lungs. If you are having difficulty giving treatment, ask for help from your practice nurse, or the hospital asthma nurse.

Contact numbers

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**Asthma UK**
Website: [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

**References**
Comments, compliments or complaints
We welcome any suggestions you have about the quality of our care and our services. Contact us: Freephone: 0800 1613997
Phone: 01625 661449
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For large print, audio, Braille version or translation, contact Communications and Engagement on 0800 195 4194.

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If you have any comments about how we can improve our services please inform a member of staff in the department or complete a comment card available throughout the hospital.
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