

KEY SYMPTOM INDICATORS FOR CONSIDERING A DIAGNOSIS OF ASTHMA

The presence of multiple key indicators increases the probability of asthma, but **spirometry** is needed to establish a diagnosis (spirometry for those >5 years of age and older).

—**Wheezing**— high-pitched whistling sounds when breathing out—especially in children. A lack of wheezing and a normal chest examination DO NOT exclude asthma.

History of any of the following:

- **Cough** (worse particularly at night)
- Recurrent wheeze
- Recurrent difficulty in breathing
- Recurrent chest tightness

Symptoms occur or worsen in the presence of:

- Exercise
- Viral infection
- Inhalant allergens (e.g., animals with fur or hair, house-dust mites, mold, pollen)
- Irritants (tobacco or wood smoke, airborne chemicals)
- Changes in weather
- Strong emotional expression (laughing or crying hard)
- Stress
- Menstrual cycles
- Symptoms occur or worsen at night, awakening the individual.

*Adapted from the NHLBI website: Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Treatment of Asthma 2007
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