

## Childhood Asthma

Asthma is chronic disease that narrows the airway/s that lead to your lungs causing breathing to be restricted, much like if you stepped on a hose slowing the water pressure. The disease is characterized by shortness of breath, wheezing, and coughing that are symptoms as a result of the narrowing airway. According to the Center for Disease control, 16 million children ages 0-17 years of age were affected with asthma in 2016. Although we now have medications and knowledge about environmental changes that reduce asthma attacks, many children still require emergency treatment and hospitalizations.

Although a genetic component is correlated with asthma, it does not necessarily mean that your child will develop the disease. Family history, along with any food or environmental allergies, raise the risk of developing asthma. There are currently many proven methods of controlling symptoms to enable children and adults with asthma to live an active and healthy lifestyle. These methods, including medications, help those with asthma to live with minimal disruption of school or work absences. Some medications are prevention medications, and some medications are provided to immediately open airways in an emergent situation when an asthma attack happens.

Keep in mind that a child or person may develop short term symptoms that mimic asthma if they develop a respiratory infection. If you notice your child is not sick and continues getting tired easily, gasps for air during playing, or you notice a whistling sound during their breathing, your child could have asthma and should see their family doctor. If a child is gasping for air and begins to turn red or blue, this is a medical emergency and you should call 911.

The Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH) program can help provide additional medical coverage for children with medical conditions, such as asthma. If you have any questions, please contact Angie Rosler RN at the Meigs County Health Department: (740) 992-6626.

