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Asthma in children

Asthma is a significant cause of ill health in children and a common reason for Emergency Department attendance and hospitalisation.¹⁻⁵ Poor asthma control leads to under performance at school and lost school days depriving affected children of both academic achievement and social interaction.⁶⁻⁸ Many barriers can stand in the way of asthma diagnosis and management (see box below). An effective management approach incorporates age-appropriate diagnostic criteria, evidence-based therapies, environmental modification and asthma education.

A proactive structured management approach including an annual review can improve clinical outcomes and may reduce the impact of asthma on absence from school.^{9,10} This review should be done by a health professional who has appropriate training in the assessment of children.

This module aims to:

- outline criteria for diagnosis of asthma in children
- review parameters of adequate control
- review criteria for admission to hospital and referral for outpatient advice
- provide an update on the most effective management options
- explore strategies to promote better control of both chronic symptoms and acute exacerbations.

[This module has been carefully reviewed by a consultant paediatrician with a special interest in asthma. Her frequent comments and additions are shown throughout in square brackets].