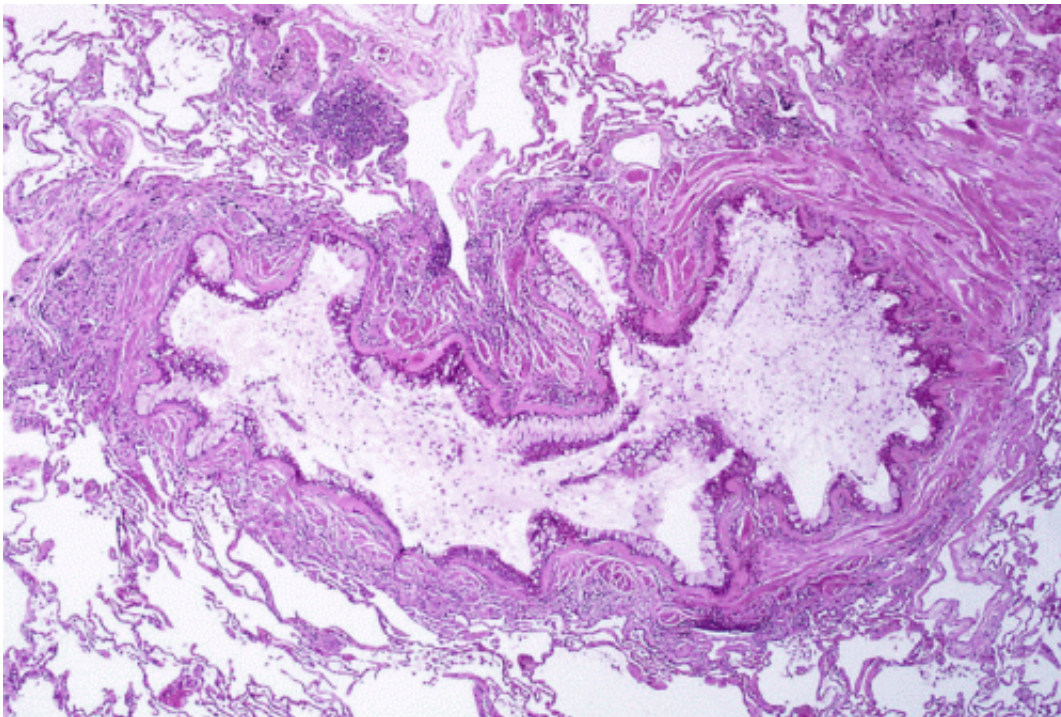


# What are the best ways to diagnose and manage asthma?

July 18 2017

---



Obstruction of the lumen of a bronchiole by mucoid exudate, goblet cell metaplasia, and epithelial basement membrane thickening in a person with asthma. Credit: Yale Rosen/Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 2.0

What are the best ways to diagnose and manage asthma in adults? This can be tricky because asthma can stem from several causes and treatment often depends on what is triggering the asthma.

A team of experts from The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston examined the current information available from many different sources on diagnosing and managing mild to moderate [asthma](#) in adults and summarized them. They determined that essential, effective treatment must involve a physical and breathing exam, a comprehensive health history of the patient and ask questions that may answer what triggers may cause an asthma attack. The findings are now available in *JAMA*.

Asthma affects nearly 8 percent of adults and leads to 1.8 million hospitalizations and 10.5 million visits to the health care provider's office each year in the U.S.

"When a patient comes in who may have asthma, it's important for providers to learn their health history, conduct a spirometry breathing test and a physical exam," said senior author Dr. William Calhoun, UTMB professor in the department of internal medicine, [pulmonary critical care](#) and sleep medicine division. "Once diagnosed, the provider should give the patient a questionnaire during each office visit to learn more about how well their [asthma symptoms](#) are controlled and how good they perceive their quality of life. Spirometry testing should be repeated every one to two years if the patient's symptoms haven't changed."

Chest imaging may be useful in diagnosing asthma in certain situations, including when the patient has a medically important smoking history or occupational chemical exposure, has long standing disease or may be at risk for chronic obstructive lung disease or lung cancer.

"The goals of [asthma treatment](#) are to reduce the patient's symptoms, help ensure that they can maintain their normal activities, perform well on pulmonary function tests and minimize asthma associated risks such as future asthma attacks and medication side effects," said Jennifer

McCracken, UTMB assistant professor in the department of internal medicine, division of allergy and immunology. "Because of the complex nature of asthma, providers need to approach patients with a guideline-based plan that takes environmental triggers such as allergens, viruses and occupational irritants into consideration as well the strengths and weaknesses of the medication that they are using in order to provide a well-tailored action plan."

The study authors noted that a key part of [asthma management](#) is a written asthma action plan that details the signs and symptoms of worsening asthma and the steps needed to combat it in layman's terms.

There are both short-acting and long-lasting asthma medications. For quick relief of symptoms, it's important for all [asthma patients](#) to have short acting inhalers readily available. These inhalers alone are appropriate for patients who only have periodic asthma. For [patients](#) with more constant asthma, longer-lasting daily maintenance controller medications are commonly prescribed in addition to short acting inhalers.

**More information:** Jennifer L. McCracken et al. Diagnosis and Management of Asthma in Adults, *JAMA* (2017). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2017.8372](#)

Provided by University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston

Citation: What are the best ways to diagnose and manage asthma? (2017, July 18) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-07-ways-asthma.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.