

Leicester Difficult Asthma Clinic

East Midlands Severe Asthma Service

Information for Patients and Carers

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Welcome to the Difficult Asthma Clinic

You have been referred to the Difficult Asthma Clinic at Glenfield Hospital.

The Difficult Asthma Service in Leicester is a specialist service. It cares for people who have asthma that is difficult to manage or control with standard medication alone.

The service is made up of a team of

- specialist doctors
- specialist nurses
- health professionals (such as a specialist pharmacist, speech and language therapist, psychologist and physiotherapist)

They will assess your asthma and work with you to help improve the management of your asthma.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What is severe or 'difficult' asthma?

You may have been told that you have severe asthma or difficult asthma.

People with severe or difficult asthma usually have symptoms of asthma (breathlessness, cough, wheeze) most days even when they are taking regular medication to manage it. They will also have flare ups a number of times each year when their asthma is severe enough to need treatment with steroid tablets or a stay in hospital.

The assessments we do in the clinic help us to find out why you are having more asthma symptoms and flare ups. We look at if you have a severe form of asthma, or if there are other reasons that make managing and treating your asthma more difficult.

What happens at the Difficult Asthma Clinic?

- Before seeing a doctor in the Difficult Asthma Clinic, you will have a separate appointment in the nurse pre-assessment clinic. You may also see a Consultant Pharmacist
- You will then be seen by one of the consultants or specialist registrars.
- They will talk to you about your history of asthma and your symptoms.
- They will examine you.
- They will then talk to you about your treatment options.
- You may also see one of the specialist nursing team if more support or assessments are needed.
- As part of your treatment plan, you may be referred to another member of the team, for example, a pharmacist, physiotherapist, speech and language therapist or a psychologist. Sometimes, referrals are also needed to other specialties, such as ENT, Immunology or Gastroenterology.

What is the pre-assessment clinic?

During this appointment, one of the severe asthma nurses will do:

- breathing tests
- ask you questions about your symptoms
- test for some allergies
- take blood and sputum samples if needed

This appointment is booked 1 to 2 weeks before your appointment in the Difficult Asthma Clinic. It is important as it will give the doctor more information about your asthma and breathing.

Which assessments will be done?

- **Questionnaires:** We use questionnaires to record your symptoms and your well-being. By filling these out at every visit, we can view changes in your asthma control and quality of life.
- **Lung function tests:** We ask you to do 3 breathing tests. These tests help us to understand levels of inflammation and obstruction in your airways.
 - **Exhaled nitric oxide test:** This measures the concentration of a gas (nitric oxide) in the air that you breathe out (exhale). You breathe into a small analyser for a few seconds. The results tell us how much inflammation might be in your airways.
 - **Spirometry:** This measures the amount of breath you can force out of your lungs. You take a deep breath and then breathe out as hard as possible through a spirometry machine. The results show how much air you can breathe out and how much obstruction there is in your airways.
 - **Peak flow:** Measures how fast you can breathe out.
- **Blood tests:** Blood tests may be taken to check your health, and levels of inflammation in your blood. We may also take blood to check medication levels.
- **Sputum:** If you are able to produce a sputum sample during the assessment, we may test this to look at levels of inflammatory cells in your sputum. The results can help us to check your response to certain treatments.
- **Medication review:** We will also look at your medication and ask your GP to provide details of your medication history. If possible, please record at the back of this booklet the number of times you have taken prednisolone tablets in the last 12 months.

How can I prepare for the pre-assessment appointment?

Your appointment letter will tell you what you need to do to prepare for the appointment.

For some appointments, you may be asked to stop some medication.

If the letter is not clear, or you have any concerns, please get in touch with the nursing team on 0116 258 3257.

- Always bring your inhalers and aero-chambers (spacers) to every appointment. Also bring a list of any other medication you are taking. There is space at the end of this booklet to write down the medication that you take.
- Bring your written asthma action plan, if you have one.
- If possible, please check and record your peak flow measurements in the weeks before your pre-assessment appointment. See page 5 for more information on this. If you do not own a peak flow meter, please ask your GP to prescribe one for you.
- **If you need a translator** for your appointment, please get in touch as soon as possible so that we can arrange this for you.
- **If you are using hospital transport**, please let us know so that we can make sure that your return journey is booked.

What can I do to improve my asthma symptoms?

- **Remember to take your steroid inhaler (the preventer) as prescribed.** It is important that you continue to take this inhaler even when you are feeling well,. If you do not know how to take it, then contact your GP, practice nurse or local pharmacist for advice.
- **Take all other medication as prescribed.**
- **Monitor your peak flow:** The peak flow test measures how fast you can breathe out. This will help you to monitor your asthma and understand what is happening in your lungs.
- **Exercise:** regular exercise improves quality of life. Little and often is the key. If you have not exercised for a while, start with a short walk each day. Slowly try to increase your distance.
- **Stop smoking:** Stopping smoking will improve your lung health and importantly, your asthma medication will work better. Cigarette smoke stops asthma medication from working. It can be very difficult to stop and you may need support with this. There are many resources available to help you stop smoking. You can discuss these with your GP, consultant or one of the specialist nurses. You may also find some useful information on this website:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/>

Vaping will also reduce your asthma control. It can increase your risk of having a severe asthma flare-up (exacerbation) so it should be avoided. If you are using vapes to help stop smoking, your goal is to stop this as soon as possible.

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How to contact the Severe Asthma Team

If you have any questions or need advice, please get in touch with the severe asthma nursing team on the number below. If you reach the answerphone please leave a clear message with your name, NHS/hospital number, and the reason for your call. One of the team members will then return your call.

0116 258 3257, Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm

Or email the team at: severeasthaservice@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

More information and support

The Asthma and Lung UK website provides general information and advice on asthma:

www.asthmaandlung.org.uk

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk