Asthma remains the most common chronic disease in childhood.

- At least half of all children with asthma begin having symptoms before 2 years of age.
- These symptoms can be severe and, if untreated, result in unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency visits.

**Evaluation and Management**

- The asthma predictive index (API) is a reliable way to identify children with a substantially increased risk of asthma. Children are 4–10 times more likely to have asthma if they meet the following criterion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asthma Predictive Index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least one clinic-diagnosed episode of wheezing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AND</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three or more other wheezing episodes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AND</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Either:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Major Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with asthma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atopic dermatitis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aero-allergen sensitivity</td>
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</table>

- Strong consideration should be given to starting these children on a trial of therapy with low-dose inhaled steroids (such as fluticasone 44 mcg, 2 puffs twice daily, or beclomethasone dipropionate hfa 40 mcg, 2 puffs twice a day, preferred by some insurers) for 3–6 months with careful measurement of linear growth before and during this time. An asthma action plan should be provided including instructions for how and when to use rescue bronchodilators.

- Features that suggest a cause of wheeze other than asthma include failure to respond to well-administered bronchodilators, noisy or labored breathing in between episodes of cough/wheeze, breathing difficulty when swallowing, foreign body aspiration history, etc.

**When to refer**

Many families are reassured by a specialist evaluation prior to initiating inhaled steroid therapy for their child. We are happy to see these children, as well as any child where the suspicion of asthma is strong (such as chronic cough), or if there is any concern that the child has a wheezing disorder other than asthma.
Sample asthma action plan:  


**Information regarding MDI and nebulizer use in children**

Patient education sheets for MDI with spacer use:  

Patient information regarding use of a nebulizer:  


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Find this and other co-management/referral guidelines online at [www.legacyhealth.org/randallguidelines](http://www.legacyhealth.org/randallguidelines).