Assessing Asthma Severity:

Well controlled asthma:
- No cough
- No wheeze
- No chest tightness
- No limitation of activity
- Peak flow within 20% of personal best

Mild asthma symptoms:
- Requires medical attention if persistent.
- Child should not engage in vigorous activity.
- Occasional cough
- Slight wheeze
- May be a tickle in the throat
- Peak flow 50% to 80% of personal best

Moderate to severe asthma symptoms –
- Requires URGENT medical attention – Call parents!
- Persistent cough
- Persistent wheeze
- Breathing faster than normal (more than 30 breaths in a minute)
- Waking at night due to difficulty breathing
- Peak flow near 50% of personal best

Danger signs:
- Requires IMMEDIATE medical attention – call 911!!
- Difficulty speaking more than 1 or 2 words between breaths
- Hard to walk more than a few steps due to difficulty breathing
- Chest or belly sucking in with each breath
- Nostrils flaring out with each breath
- Breathing very fast (more than 40 breaths in a minute)
- Lips or fingers turning blue
- Peak flow significantly below 50% of personal best

A child who is having breathing problems from asthma should NEVER be left alone!!

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Child with asthma graphic adapted from J. Asthma 1994;31:473-8.