

NORTH RALEIGH PEDIATRIC GROUP, P.A.

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Asthma Signs and Symptoms in Young Children

Parents often worry when their child receives a diagnosis of asthma. A major concern is always “how will I know my child is about to have or is having an asthma attack?” This is especially worrisome for the parent of a young child who cannot identify or express how they are feeling. Here are some possible signs and symptoms of an impending asthma attack.

Abdominal breathing is when the abdominal muscles are used for breathing more than the chest muscles. The stomach goes up and down if the child is lying down, or in and out when the child is standing.

Nasal Flaring is when the nostrils are opening wider than usual when the child breathes in.

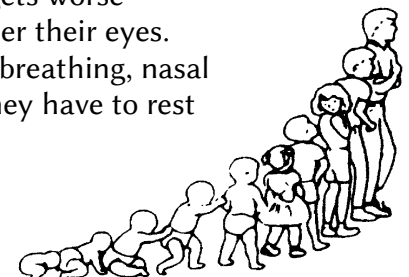
Retractions are when the skin above the breastbone and/or collarbone and below the rib cage or between the ribs get sucked in each time they inhale.

Rapid breathing: To count a child’s breathing, it is sometimes easier if you put your hand on their back or stomach and count each time they take one complete breathe both in and out. For babies it is most accurate to count for 1 full minutes as they normally have irregular breathing. For older children, you can count for 15 seconds and multiply by 4. The fastest way is to count for 6 seconds and multiply by 10 which is easiest, but the least accurate. It can however rapidly give you a general idea of their respiration rate.

Age	Normal Respiration Rate
Under 1 year	30-53 per minute
1-2 years	22-37 per minute
3-5 years	20-28 per minute
6-11 years	18-25 per minute
12 and up	12-20 per minute

Infants: Children less than 1 year of age often will become fussy, will not be as interested in feeding, and may sleep more that usual. In general, they won’t be themselves. You may notice your baby has to pause when they are feeding to catch their breath. They may start coughing, with the cough getting worse when you put them down to sleep. Sometimes you will notice that they seem to be working hard to breathe. You may see abdominal breathing, nasal flaring and/or retractions. The baby may be breathing faster than normal.

Children ages 1 to 5 years: Children of this age often will not be as active as usual. They may not eat or drink as much as they usually do. They may have a frequent cough or a spasmodic cough where they cough repeatedly until they gag or vomit. The cough often gets worse during the night but not always. Some young children will get dark circles under their eyes. You might see them working hard to breath and like the infant see abdominal breathing, nasal flaring and/or retractions. They sometimes will have trouble talking because they have to rest to catch their breathe before completing a sentence.



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