

Usually occur over 48 hours allowing time to intervention. Patients should be taught to recognise warning signs and provided with clear written instructions.

Definitions

- **Moderately Severe**
 - Increasing symptoms
 - PEF 50-75% best or predicted
 - No features of acute severe asthma

- **Acute Severe**
Any one of:
 - PEF 33-50% best or predicted
 - Respiratory rate 25/min
 - Heart rate 110/min
 - Inability to complete sentences in one breath

- **Life-Threatening/Near-Fatal**
Any one of the following in a patient with acute severe asthma:
 - PEF <33% best or predicted
 - SaO₂ < 92%
 - Cyanosis, bradycardia, feeble respiratory effort, silent chest, hypotension, exhaustion, confusion, coma.

When to refer to hospital

- Patient with any feature of a life-threatening or a near-fatal attack
- Features of severe attack persist following initial treatment
- Lower threshold if:
 - Concerns re: compliance

 - Live alone/social isolation
 - Psychological problems/learning difficulties
 - Prior h/o near-fatal or brittle asthma
 - Presentation at night
 - Pregnancy

Management en-route to hospital

- Stay with patient until ambulance arrives
- Administer high doses of bronchodilator through large volume spacer or nebuliser if available
- Instruct ambulance crew to administer high concentration oxygen & nebulisers