



European Respiratory Society Guidelines for the Diagnosis of Asthma in Adults

Authors: Louis R, Satia I, Ojanguren I, Schleich F, Bonini M, Tonia T, Rigau D, Ten Brinke A, Buhl R, Loukides S, Kocks JW. European Respiratory Society guidelines for the diagnosis of asthma in adults.

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Background

Asthma is the most common chronic inflammatory airway disease globally with a prevalence reaching 5-10%, affecting 339 million people worldwide. Asthma is both under- and over-diagnosed. The insufficient use of spirometry is fundamentally recognized to cause misdiagnosis when the diagnosis is based primarily on symptoms alone.

A 2018 task force established by the European Respiratory Society (ERS) reviewed the literature from 1946-2019 on the diagnostic accuracy of tests used to diagnose asthma in adult patients and provide recommendations for clinical practice.

In adults with suggestive symptoms:

Can airway obstruction measured by forced spirometry help diagnose asthma?

Forced spirometry should be performed to detect airway obstruction as part of the diagnostic work-up of adults aged >18 years with suspected asthma. An FEV1/FVC below the lower limit of normal or <75% (higher than the commonly utilized 70% threshold) should be considered supportive of an asthma diagnosis. Normal spirometry does not exclude asthma.

Can measuring fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) help diagnose asthma?

In patients suspected of asthma, the task force suggests measuring the fraction of exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO) as part of the diagnostic work-up of adults aged >18 years with suspected asthma.

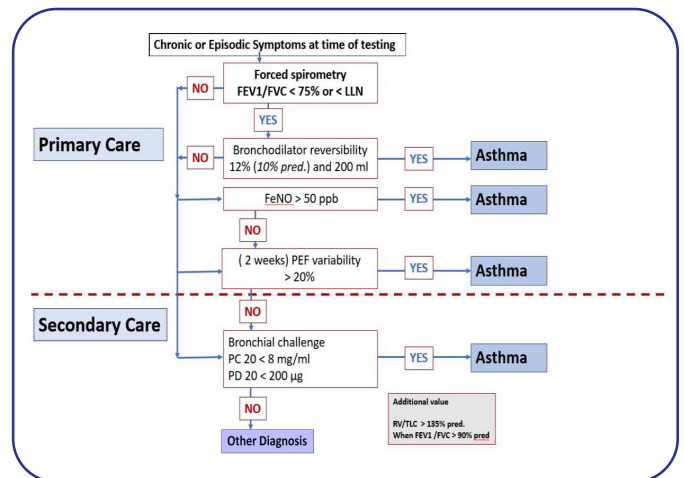


Figure 1 Algorithm for asthma diagnosis in adults with current symptoms

Can measuring blood eosinophil count help diagnose asthma?

The task force suggests not measuring blood eosinophil count to make a diagnosis of asthma.

Can measuring total serum immunoglobulin E (IgE) help diagnose asthma?

The task force suggests not measuring total serum IgE to make a diagnosis of asthma.

Can combining FeNO, blood eosinophils and IgE help diagnose asthma?

The TF suggests not combining FeNO, blood eosinophils and serum IgE to make a diagnosis of asthma.

Can bronchial-challenge testing help diagnose asthma?

The task force suggests that bronchial challenge testing should be performed in secondary care to confirm a diagnosis of asthma in adults when the diagnosis was not previously established in primary care.

Can measuring of specific airway conductance (sGaw) and RV/TLC help in the diagnosis of asthma?

The task force suggests not measuring sGaw and RV/TLC by whole body plethysmography to make a diagnosis of asthma.

Conclusions

- The task force emphasizes the importance of accurate diagnosis and aggressive use of forced spirometry
- Whether measuring FeNO or monitoring PEF should be implemented in primary care depends on the availability and access to bronchial challenge.
- Both direct and indirect bronchial challenges detect airway hyper-reactivity in patients with symptoms.

GLOBAL HEADQUARTERS

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