

We all breathe in Aspergillus (fungal) spores each day:

- This does no harm in people with a healthy immune system, as it clears fungal spores before they become a problem.
- If the immune system is weakened (e.g. in asthma) the spores can get a foothold.



Who can be affected by Aspergillosis? People with:

- Existing asthma, COPD or TB.
- Cystic Fibrosis.
- Bronchiectasis (widening of airways).
- Cancer and on chemotherapy.
- Organ transplants on immunosuppressants.
- Primary Immunodeficiency syndromes.

Please ask your GP about Aspergillosis if you have any of these:

- Asthma flare-ups despite using inhalers correctly.
- Frequent chest infections that don't respond to antibiotics.
- Choking-coughing fits, producing mucous 'plugs' that are difficult to cough-up and difficulty breathing.
- Constantly sniffing or a running nose, as it can sometimes affect the sinuses too.
- Needing to take more sick leave if you work, due to chest infections.
- Coughing up blood.



Seeing a specialist:

- Earlier diagnosis of Aspergillosis and referral to a specialist centre helps treatment and outcome.
- Types of tests used to diagnose Aspergillosis: skin prick/allergen tests, blood tests to find out Aspergillus-specific antibody levels, IgE levels (anti-inflammatory marker), chest x-ray and chest CT scans (which may show infiltrates [blood, pus or fluid] in ABPA, or nodules and/or cavities in CPA).

Questions to ask:

- Prepare for consultations in advance. This is to make the most of the limited time with the doctor.
- You may also feel a little anxious as this is all new and unfamiliar. Having a list of questions will help you focus on getting the answers you need from the consultation, putting your mind at ease. You may want to ask:

01 About Aspergillosis the condition:

- What is the likely disease progression for me, as I understand that it's different for each person?



02 About underlying causes:

- What is the underlying cause in my case?
- Do I have other conditions such as bronchiectasis? This is permanent scarring and widening of the airway, making it harder to clear mucous. This causes more infections, as mucous provides the ideal growing conditions for them.
- Do I have any other lung infections at the moment? (Aspergillus, Pseudomonas and Mycobacterium Avium Complex/Non-tuberculous Mycobacteria are often seen together.)

03 About treatment:

- What treatment is available to me now?
- How long will I need to be on treatment?
- What side effects are there?
- How will I know if treatment is working?
- How will it be monitored?
- Will it interact with any of my other medicines? See: www.aspergillus.org.uk/content/antifungal-drug-interactions

04 About management:

- How often will I need to come to these outpatient appointments? Who can I call, if any problems arise between appointments? What else can I do to manage the condition at home?
- Ask for explanations if you don't understand anything and for this to be included in the letter to your GP/specialist(s). Ask to be sent a copy to remind you what was discussed.

