



Is it really asthma?

Idiopathic subglottic stenosis is a build up of scar tissue in the trachea just below the vocal cords for no known reason. 98% of patients with this disease are females, with symptoms starting in their 30s or around times of hormone spikes (eg pregnancy and menopause). Frequently misdiagnosed as asthma, left untreated or undiagnosed the airway can close up or block potentially leading to death.

Do you have an adult female patient aged between **25-70 years** (but especially 35-45 years) where...

- Asthma medication** does **not** seem to **make any difference** to her breathing
- She started to **struggle** with breathing **almost overnight** or **progressively worsening over time** with no prior history of breathing difficulties
- She has a **stridor** (wheezes when she breathes in) rather than just a wheeze (when she breathes out)
- Sounds like** she may have **croup**, maybe describes as 'breathing like Darth Vader'
- Coughs** or **clears her throat** regularly
- Shortness of breath** is **constant** but **worsens on exertion** or with **exercise**. There is no 'attack' as with asthma.

If this sounds like any of your patients, please strongly consider referring her to an **ENT/Otolaryngologist** AND **insist they use laryngoscope** to inspect her airway looking for a blockage **below her vocal cords**. It could be subglottic stenosis.

National Organization for Rare Diseases: rarediseases.org/rare-diseases/idiopathic-subglottic-stenosis/

Patient support group: facebook.com/groups/idiopathicsubglotticstenosis