

Diagnosis

Time for "Diagnosis."

OK, that's it.

Tell me, how does your breathing feel?

Feels really good. It doesn't feel tight or hard to breathe anymore.

All right! You cured him, Doc!

No, Jiggs. We don't "cure" asthma. "Cure" means you've fixed a health problem and it's gone away. We can control asthma and keep you feeling good, but we can't really cure it and make it disappear.

So, it IS asthma?

Yes, Big. That's my official diagnosis. You have asthma.

So, how did he get it?

Actually, he was born with it. At least he was born with the trait.

Huh? What's a "trait"?

A "trait" is sort of how you're made. Like you have the traits for smooth skin and a curly tail and Big has the traits for big teeth and a fluffy tail.

Wait. You said he was born with the trait. But if he was born with it, how come he just started having trouble?

Actually, from his answers to some of my questions earlier, it sounds as if Big has had off-and-on problems with asthma for at least a year. A part of diagnosing asthma is finding out that the wheezing and other symptoms happen more than just once, that they come back.

Well, how come if he was born with the trait, he didn't have any problems when he was just a little wolf?

Having the trait for asthma doesn't mean you have asthma symptoms. Some people with asthma may go their whole lives and have very few, if any, problems with it.

Diagnosis

Huh? But, if they have asthma, how come they get off the hook but Big doesn't?

People with asthma have lungs which are extra-sensitive to certain things. These things are called "triggers" and can include smoke or dust or pollution. If someone with asthma doesn't get exposed to these triggers, their asthma may never act up.

Hey, maybe my dad has problems with asthma triggers. He wheezes and he coughs, and his huff and puff isn't what it used to be.

Maybe. Asthma does run in families. You told me your dad smokes, so of course, smoking is a part of his problem, too.

But he's smoked a long time. He didn't start having any problems until a few years ago, when he was way older than I am now.

Asthma symptoms can come on at any age. You're never too young or too old.

Hmmm...so, what's next? You gonna tell me what I gotta do?

Well, Big, I don't like telling you what to do. I'm much happier working together with you and your family, to help you understand asthma and learn how to take care of it.

So, what's the game plan?

Ha! That is a perfect question, Big. There's quite a lot to know about taking good care of your asthma. We call it your "Asthma Action Plan."

Action plan? "Action" is my middle name.

Huh...I thought it was Barry.

Your Asthma Action Plan has three zones: green, yellow, and red. Knowing which zone you're in can help you know what to do to take care of your asthma.

Dr. Yan, we have some serious pumpkin-related stomach issues in Room 3.

Oh, not again!

Diagnosis

Ha ha ha... Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater, I'll bet.

Are Big's parents on their way?

Here any minute.

Good. When they arrive, bring them right in. I'd like you to teach everyone about "Triggers" - our first step in building your Asthma Action Plan.

So, I guess we'll learn a lot more about asthma triggers in the next episode.

Absolutely!