

WHEN SHOULD WE RELEASE PATIENTS ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL WITH ACUTE SEVERE ASTHMA ?

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Background There is no consensus on the optimal timing of release from hospital in patients admitted with acute severe asthma. **Method** We compared 2 discharge protocols in consecutive patients following intensive hospital treatment of acute severe asthma: (1) Routine - home after *remission* of signs & symptoms (1997 NIH practice guidelines) and (2) Early - home after *improvement but before remission* of signs & symptoms. Patients who had complicating diseases or were likely to be non compliant were excluded.

Results Mean(SD)	Routine	Early	p values
Number of admissions	80	78	
Age [yrs]	38(15)	38(16)	ns
Length of stay [days]	3.4(1.4)	1.8(1)	< 0.001
PEFR at discharge [% pred.]	71(15)	58(17)	< 0.001
Relapse at 3 weeks [%]	0	0	
Relapse at 3 months [%]	4	6	ns

Conclusion Asthmatics who respond promptly to in-patient treatment and are compliant with medication experience very low early relapse rates despite incomplete resolution of symptoms, signs and PEFR at the time of hospital discharge.