

Asthma

Living Well With Asthma

What is Asthma?

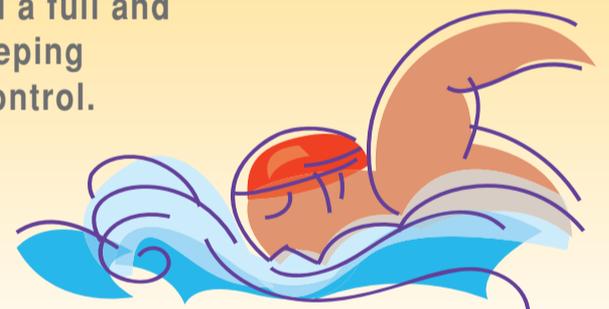
Asthma is a condition where the airways in the lungs are sensitive and react to certain factors or triggers. The airways can become narrow and inflamed, making breathing difficult.

What are the signs of Asthma?

- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Breathlessness
- Coughing, especially at night

Can Asthma be Cured?

There is no cure for asthma, but you can lead a full and active life by keeping asthma under control.



How to Control Asthma?



Work closely with your doctor to develop a management plan and review it periodically. The key is to:

- Avoid triggers that cause asthma attacks.
- Take preventive medication everyday, even if you feel well.

If asthma is well-managed, "reliever" medication should not be used more than once per week.

Asthma

What Is An Asthma Attack?

During an attack, the airways in the lungs become narrower or blocked, and breathing becomes difficult.

What Causes an Asthma Attack?

An asthma attack is caused by certain factors, called "triggers". A trigger is anything that irritates the airways and causes the symptoms of asthma to appear. Below are some common triggers:

Infections

- Colds or flu
- Other viral infections



Airborne Substances

- Dust mite droppings
- Pollen
- Cockroach droppings
- Cigarette smoke
- Strong fumes and odours
- Polluted air



Dust mite (enlarged)

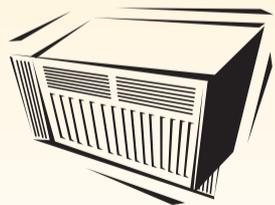
Food/Drugs

- Sulphites as a preservative in foods such as canned drinks, wine, dried fruit and sausages
- Certain medications



Other triggers include:

- Sudden weather changes or entering into an air-conditioned building on a hot day
- Strong emotions such as stress or even a laughing fit
- Over-exertion



The triggers vary for different people. Avoiding triggers alone is not enough to control asthma. You still need to take "preventer" medication regularly.

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What To Do During An Asthma Attack?



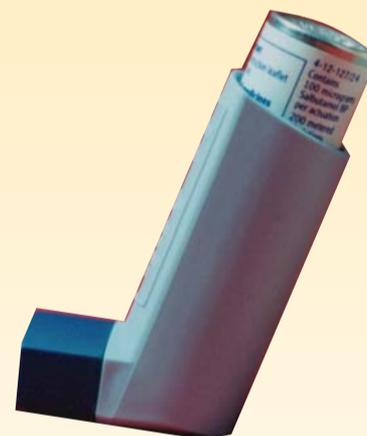
Signs and symptoms of an asthma attack:

- **Breathlessness**
- **Wheezing**
- **Coughing**
- **Chest tightness**

1 Stay calm.



2 Take “reliever” medication.
Repeat every 20 minutes for up to 1 hour.



3 Get emergency medical help if symptoms:

- are not relieved or
- worsen quickly or
- return within 4 hours



Asthma

Asthma Medication

The two main types of asthma medications are "Relievers" and "Preventers".

Relievers



- Relieve asthma symptoms almost immediately during an asthma attack. (Preventers cannot do this.)
- Are to be taken immediately when symptoms appear and should be kept within reach at all times.
- Usually come in blue inhalers.

Preventers



- Prevent asthma attacks by making the air passages less sensitive to triggers.
- Are to be taken daily and on a long-term basis.
- Usually come in brown inhalers.



Importance of "Preventer" Medicines:

- They reduce the frequency and severity of asthma attacks.
- They reduce asthma deaths.
- They may seem expensive but are more cost-effective in the long run (you avoid repeated medical visits and hospitalisation).
- If "preventer" medication is not taken, the asthma condition may not be controlled, and this is dangerous.

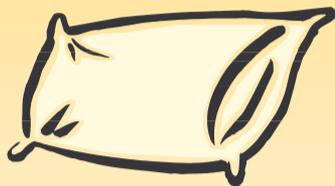
(Note: "Reliever" medication alone will not be able to achieve the above.)

**Control asthma.
Don't let asthma control you!**

Asthma

Handy Hints

Home Tips



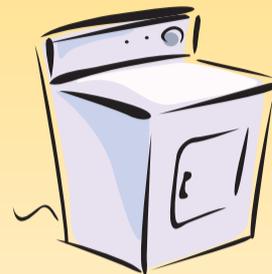
- Hot wash sheets, quilt covers and pillowcases once a week. Use cotton or synthetic blankets instead of wool. Use synthetic instead of feather pillows. Use barrier covers for pillows and wipe over with a damp cloth once a week.



- Keep soft toys to a minimum. Either hot wash them every 1-2 weeks or put soft toys into a bag in the freezer for six hours to kill mites.



- Vacuum and damp dust frequently. Choose furnishing that does not collect dust – avoid carpets and upholstery.



- Wash curtains every 2-3 months. Vertical blinds are often preferred, but keep them dust-free.

Exercise

You may find that the fitter you are, the better your asthma condition is controlled. However, if exercise triggers your asthma, here are tips to let you join in the fun:



- Take the usual dose of reliever inhaler (usually blue) about 5 – 10 minutes before exercise and keep it within reach at all times. If you need to use it, wait for it to take effect before continuing with the exercise.
- If symptoms persist, the asthma condition might not be properly under control. See your doctor to adjust the treatment.
- Swimming and brisk walking are suitable exercises for asthmatics.

Holidays

- Consult your doctor before your trip.
- Take enough inhalers and tablets to last the holiday plus a few extra days. Bring spare medication in case it gets lost.
- Find out how to get medical help at your holiday destination and note down the telephone number of the local ambulance or doctor.

