

ASTHMA



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Section 1: Overview

Asthma (pronounced: AZ-muh) is a lung condition that makes it hard to breathe. Lots of people have asthma, from young kids to the elderly.

With normal breathing, air flows in through the nose or mouth and then into *the windpipe* (trachea). From there, it passes through *the airways* (bronchial tubes), into the lungs, and finally back out again.

In people with asthma, the airways are *inflamed* (swollen) and produce lots of thick mucus. Inflamed airways are also very sensitive, and things like dust or smoke can make the muscles around them tighten up. All these things can narrow the airways and make it harder for a person to breathe.

Section 2: What Causes Asthma?

No one knows exactly why some people develop asthma. Experts think it might be a combination of environmental factors and genes.

People with asthma may have a parent or other close relative with asthma. Those who are overweight may be more likely to have it.

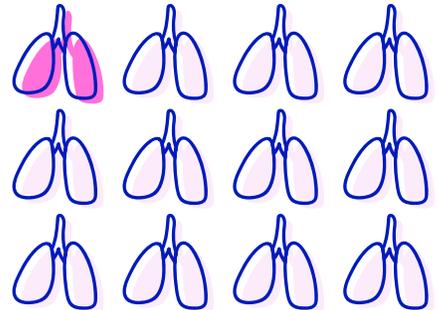
Asthma isn't contagious.

You can't catch it from someone who has it.



DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 12 children have asthma.



HALL OF FAME

These celebrities all have asthma, but that didn't stop them from pursuing their dreams.



Dennis Rodman

Former NBA basketball player and Hall of Famer

DMX

American rapper and actor

Eminem

Multi-platinum rapper

John F. Kennedy

35th President of the United States

Pink

Philly native pop singer and songwriter

Section 3: How Is Asthma Treated?

There's no cure for asthma, but it can be managed to prevent flare-ups.

Asthma treatment involves two important components: avoiding triggers and taking medicine.



WHAT'S AN INHALER?

It is an asthma medicine that is inhaled, or breathed directly into the lungs. There are two types used to treat asthma.

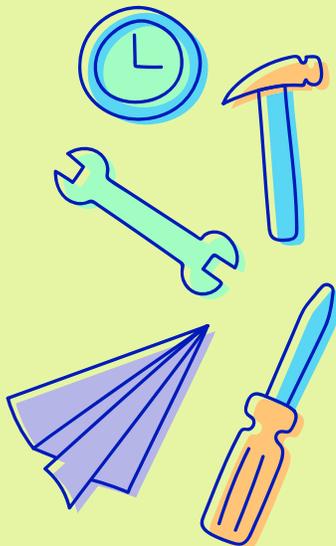
2 TYPES OF INHALERS

Controller or Maintenance

These are long-term control medicines, which manage asthma and prevent symptoms from happening in the first place. Many people need to take daily medicines to manage asthma. These medicines help prevent flare-ups before they start. They work differently from quick-relief medicines because they treat the problem of airway inflammation instead of the symptoms (coughing, wheezing, etc.) that it causes.

Rescue or Fast-Acting

They can be used as needed during a flare-up. Quick-relief medicines act fast, but their effect doesn't last long.



Taking Medicine

Long-term control medicines can take days or even weeks to start working. Their regular use should lessen the need for quick-relief medicines, *but they need to be taken every day or they can't do their job.*

Some people with asthma only need quick-relief medicine; others need both kinds of medicine to keep their asthma in check.

Asthma care can seem overwhelming, especially at first. That's why people with asthma need to work closely with a doctor to create an asthma action plan that's right for them. The written plan will say when to take medicines, what triggers to avoid, when to go to the ER, and more. Refer to your plan often.

Your doctor might also ask you to use a peak flow meter as a way to monitor your asthma.



TIP:

Try to keep track of your asthma symptoms in an asthma journal. This can help the doctor track how you feel after taking medicines.

Section 4: Asthma Triggers

Asthma triggers are things that can cause a flare-up. Common triggers are in even the cleanest homes. There are also other things that can trigger flare ups like excercises and medicines. The best way to prevent flare-ups caused by triggers is to identify and to avoid them.



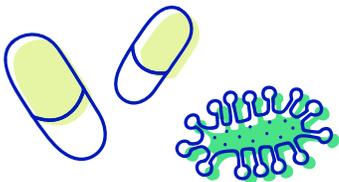
Weather

Exposure to cold, dry air or weather changes.



Illness

Viral and bacterial respiratory infections such as colds, flu, bronchitis, sinusitis and acid reflux.



Anti-inflammatory Medication

Some medicines can cause or worsen asthma symptoms. Including aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, and beta-blockers.



Emotions

Emotional anxiety and stress may also increase asthma symptoms and trigger an attack.



Exercise-induced Asthma

Use albuterol at least fifteen minutes before you begin excercising.



Common Asthma Triggers

Common asthma triggers can often times be found in and around the house including mold, mildew, insects, pets, smoke, pollen, and chemicals.

HOW TO MANAGE ASTHMA



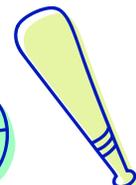
- Avoid triggers.
- Follow your Asthma Action Plan.
- Take medicines your doctor prescribes as directed.
- Get the flu shot.
- Keep an Asthma Journal.
- Getting proper rest, eating right, and exercise can also help!



DID YOU KNOW?



Caring for asthma takes a bit of work, but if you learn how to manage it and check in with your doctor regularly, you can do anything that people without asthma do.



Section 5: Protecting against Asthma Triggers

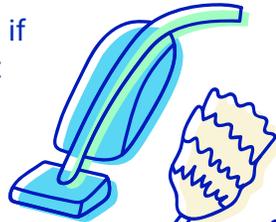
Here are some simple ways to help protect against common asthma triggers.

Dust Mites

Dust mites are microscopic bugs that live in dust. They like soft places like pillows, blankets, mattresses, and stuffed animals.

Take care of your bedding:

- Put pillows, mattresses, and box springs inside allergen-proof, zippered covers.
- Wash all bedding once a week.
- Don't buy pillows and bedding made with feathers.
- Stick to non-carpeted flooring if possible, or buy products that get dust mites out of carpets.



Take care of your heating and air conditioning devices:

- Regularly change filters on heaters and air conditioners.
- Cover air ducts with filters or cheesecloth. Change them when they get dirty.



Replace non-washable items with washable items:

- Replace heavy, lined curtains, drapes or blinds with washable window coverings.
- Replace traditional stuffed animals with those you can wash.



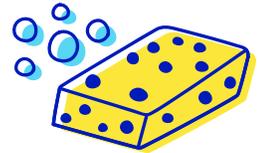
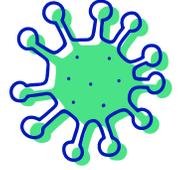
Stay clean and organized:

- Dust everywhere, including lampshades and windowsills, with a damp cloth.
- Keep clutter under control.
- Put all clothing in drawers and closets, and keep them closed.



Mold and Mildew

Mold is a microscopic plant-like organism. It can grow on many surfaces, and prefers damp places like bathrooms and basements.



- Air out damp and humid areas.
- Run a dehumidifier to keep humidity 25% - 50%.
- Use air conditioning if you can.
- Clean bathrooms with products that kill and prevent mold.
- Use exhaust fans after a hot shower.
- Keep plants out of bedrooms.
- If you paint your home, add mold inhibitor to paints to prevent mold from growing.
- Avoid places where outdoor molds can grow, such as wet leaves or garden debris.



Pests

Even in the cleanest of homes and apartments, insects and cockroaches can be found.

- Use roach baits or traps.
- If you use insect sprays, spray them only when no one else is at home.



TIP: Let your house air out for a couple of hours before you or your family come back. Airborne chemicals can also be an asthma trigger.

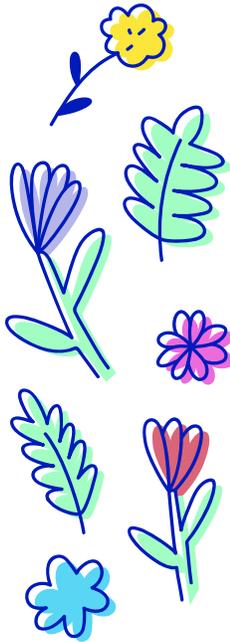
Section 6: Avoiding Asthma Triggers

Preventing all triggers is impossible, but you can make efforts to avoid some common ones.

Pollen

It's everywhere, so it's tough to avoid completely. But you can cut down on how much you are being exposed to it:

- Pollen counts are highest early in the morning, especially on warm, dry days. Limit how much you or your child do outdoors during these times.
- Keep windows closed during pollen seasons.
- Use air conditioning if you can.
- Pay attention to when the seasons change.
- Keep up with allergy medicine to prevent flare-ups.



Airborne Chemicals

- Try not to use aerosol sprays, paint, and cleaning products with heavy odors when you're at home. Make sure your house has the right ventilation.
- Wear a mask or handkerchief over your mouth when you clean, dust, vacuum, sweep, or work in the yard.
- Don't use perfumes, scented lotions, or other strong-smelling products that may irritate your lungs.
- Avoid wood smoke.
- If you live in an area where air pollution is a problem, limit your time outdoors when the pollution counts are high.
- Use an exhaust fan when you cook to remove smoke and odors.



Pets

It's best not to own any pets if you or your child is highly allergic. Definitely stay away from any animals that you know you're allergic to. Here are some tips to avoid triggering a flare-up:

- Try to avoid long visits to homes of friends and family who have pets. If you do drop by, make sure you or your child takes asthma medicines ahead of time. Try to spend as little time around the animals as you can while you're there.
- If you do have a cat or dog in the home, try to limit the places where it can go. Do not allow them in the Bedroom!
- Wash your animals weekly.
- Remove as much carpet as you can. Animal dander and hair builds up in the fibers and stays there, even after the pet is gone.
- Vacuum frequently, if you cannot remove the carpet entirely.



Tobacco Smoke

- If you smoke, quit -- if not for yourself, for your child.
- If other family members smoke, help them understand why it's harmful, and encourage them to quit.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home, car, or when they're around your child.
- Choose smoke-free places to go with your family. Avoid restaurants and public areas that allow smoking.

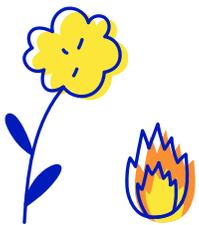


Section 7: Asthma Flare Up

What's an Asthma Flare-Up?

An asthma flare-up is when asthma symptoms get worse, making someone wheeze, cough, or be short of breath. An asthma flare-up can happen even when asthma is controlled.

Asthma flare-ups are also called *asthma attacks* or *exacerbations*.

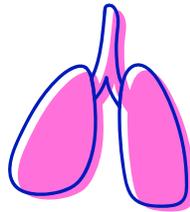


Triggers like allergies, respiratory infections (like a cold), cigarette smoke, exercise, or even cold air can cause a flare-up and make asthma symptoms worse.

What Happens During an Asthma Flare-Up?

During a flare-up, you might have:

- trouble breathing
- a tight chest
- a wheeze
- a cough



Flare-ups happen when the airways in the lungs get more irritated and swollen than usual. Your lungs might make a sticky mucus, which clogs the airways. The muscles around the airways will also tighten up, making them really narrow. This clogging and narrowing make it tough to pull air in and push air out.

If the flare-up is severe, a person might:

- struggle to breathe or have fast breathing even when sitting still
- not be able to speak more than a few words at a time without pausing
- have retractions (sucking in of muscles in the neck and chest) while breathing in



Flare-ups can happen suddenly. They also can build up over time, especially if you haven't been taking your asthma medicine.

FLARE-UP PREVENTION



Asthma flare-ups can be handled, but it's even better if you can prevent them from happening. To do that:

- Take asthma medicines as directed.
- Get a flu shot each year before flu season starts.
- Avoid triggers. By knowing and avoiding your triggers, you might be able to prevent some flare-ups.

Work with your doctor to build and update your asthma action plan. That way, you know what to do if a flare-up happens and you're in control if things get too serious.



What to Do if an Asthma Flare-up Happens to **YOU?**

After you've had a few flare-ups, you may notice that you feel a certain way when one is coming on. Do you have a tight chest or an itchy throat? Are you feeling tired? Do you have a cough, even though you don't have a cold?

How to Handle an Asthma Flare-Up?

- If you feel like a flare-up is about to happen, stay calm. Let people around you know what's going on. Then remember your asthma action plan. That will tell you what to do next.
- Focus on what your asthma action plan. If you have it, use your quick-relief medicine or inhaler.
- If you know the trigger (like a pet, or smoke), remove it or yourself from the area. That may help calm your flare-up.
- If a flare-up is more severe, you might need to get help. Don't be embarrassed to get medical help.

What to Do if an Asthma Flare-up Happens to **SOMEONE ELSE?**

An asthma flare-up can be scary, both for the person having it and anyone who sees it happening. A friend who knows how to handle the situation can be a big help. You can be the first line of defense for someone who is having an asthma flare-up. So it's great that you want to be prepared!

Here's what to do:

- Stay calm and help your friend relax. Do not panic.
- Take your friend away from any possible asthma triggers immediately.
- Have your friend sit upright, this may help them breathe easier.
- If your friend can talk, ask what about his or her asthma action plan. If your friend is able to tell you, follow the plan.
- If your friend can't speak or doesn't remember what to do, ask if he or she have an inhaler to use. If so, get the inhaler and help your friend to use it.



GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IF...

- If your flare-up doesn't get better after using your asthma medicine.
- If your symptoms come back quickly.
- You have frequent wheezing, a lasting cough, or chest pain.
- Your lips and fingernails are bluish or grayish.
- You have trouble breathing, talking, or walking.



CALL FOR HELP IF...

- An inhaler is not available or isn't helping them.
- They are having trouble talking or struggling to breathe.
- Their lips are turning blue.
- They become unconscious.

Asthma Action Plan

Fill this out to make your own action plan!

IMPORTANT INFO

Name: _____

Date: _____

Doctor name: _____

Doctor phone: _____

Emergency contact: _____

Emergency phone: _____

TRIGGERS: pollen mold dust mites animals smoke air pollution
 exercise cold/flu weather food other:

Personal Best Peak Flow: _____

EXERCISED-INDUCED FLARE-UP

Instructions for an exercised-induced asthma flare-up

Medicine: _____

How much: _____

When: _____

Additional instructions: _____

The GREEN Zone (also known as the safety zone)

Symptoms

- Breathing is easy
- No cough or wheeze
- Can do usual activities
- Can sleep through the night

Peak flow from ____ to ____

Use these long-term control medicines as listed:

Medicine	How much	How often/when

The YELLOW Zone (also known as the caution zone)

Symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Cough, wheeze, or chest tightness
- Difficulty doing usual activities
- Sleep disrupted by symptoms
- Cold or flu symptoms

Peak flow from ____ to ____ Call your doctor if: _____

Continue with long-term control medicines as above, and use these quick-relief medicines:

Medicine	How much	How often/when

The RED Zone (also known as the danger zone)

Symptoms

- Severe breathing problems
- Cannot do usual activities
- Difficulty walking and talking
- Rescue medicine isn't helping

Peak flow from ____ to ____

Take this medicine and call the doctor now!

Medicine	How much	How often/when

If symptoms don't improve and you can't contact the doctor, go to the hospital or call 911.