

Disease Management - Asthma

Asthma is the leading chronic illness of children in the United States.

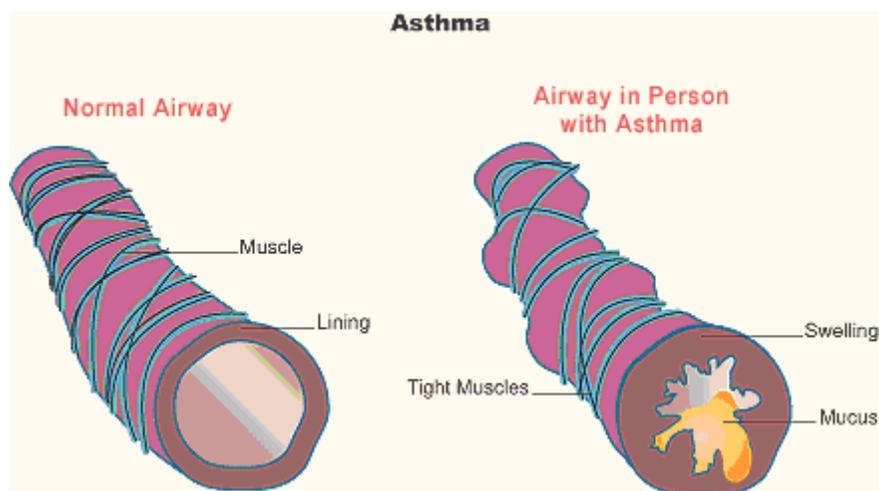
Frequently Asked Questions

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease of the lungs. It is a chronic but treatable condition. The airways of people with asthma are extra sensitive to things they are allergic to (allergens) and to other irritating things in the air (called irritants).

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), if you have asthma, the inside walls of your airways are inflamed (swollen). The inflammation (IN-fla-MAY-shun) makes the airways very sensitive, and they tend to react strongly to things that you are allergic to or find irritating. When the airways react, they get narrower, and less air flows through to your lung tissue. This causes symptoms like wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe), coughing, chest tightness, and trouble breathing, especially at night and in the early morning.

When your asthma symptoms become worse than usual, it is called asthma episode or attack. During an asthma attack, muscles around the airways tighten up, making the airways narrower so less air flows through. Inflammation increases, and the airways become more swollen and even narrower. Cells in the airways may also make more mucus than usual. This extra mucus also narrows the airways. These changes make it harder to breathe.



[More Details](#)

How do you get asthma?

The Mayo Clinic tells us, Asthma is probably due to a combination of environmental and genetic factors. You're more likely to develop asthma if it runs in your family and if you're sensitive to environmental



allergens or irritants. Early, frequent infections and chronic exposure to secondhand smoke or certain allergens may increase your chances of developing asthma.

Exposure to various allergens and irritants may trigger your asthma symptoms. The following are common things that trigger asthma symptoms:

- Allergens, such as pollen, animal dander or mold
- Cockroaches and dust mites
- Air pollutants and irritants
- Smoke
- Strong odors or scented products or chemicals
- Respiratory infections, including the common cold
- Physical exertion, including exercise
- Strong emotions and stress
- Cold air
- Certain medications, including beta blockers, aspirin and other non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
- Sulfites, preservatives added to some perishable foods
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), a condition in which stomach acid back up into your esophagus. GERD may trigger an asthma attack or make an attack worse.
- Sinusitis

[More Details](#)

How is asthma treated?

"Most people with asthma take 2 kinds of medicines. One kind is called controller medicine. These medicines help control the inflammation so you feel and breathe better. They stop your airways from reacting to what triggers your asthma. Controller medicines work only if you take them every day, as your doctor tells you.

Another kind of asthma medicine is quick-relief or rescue medicine (also called bronchodilators). These medicines dilate the airways (make them bigger) and make it easier for you to breathe. These inhaled medicines should only be used for quick relief when you are coughing or wheezing, or when your chest feels tight.

For more information regarding asthma medicines visit [click here](#).

How can I tell if my child has asthma?

The WebMD tells us Signs and symptoms to look for include:

- Frequent coughing spells, which may occur during play, at night, or while laughing. It is important to know that cough may be the only symptom present.
- Less energy during play.



- Rapid breathing
- Complaint of chest tightness or chest "hurting"
- Whistling sound (wheezing) when breathing in or out
- See-saw motions (refrctions) in the chest from labored breathing
- Shortness of breath, loss of breath
- Tightened neck and chest muscles
- Feelings of weakness or tiredness

Keep in mind that not all children have the same asthma symptoms, and these symptoms can vary from asthma episode to the next episode in the same child. Also note that not all wheezing or coughing is caused by asthma.

In kids under 5 years of age, the most common cause of asthma-like symptoms is upper respiratory viral infections such as the common cold. If your child has problem breathing, take him or her to the doctor immediately for an evaluation.

Is it possible to get rid of asthma?

Asthma is a chronic condition, this means you cannot get rid of it. However, you can manage your condition much like someone manages diabetes or heart disease. You and your doctor can work together to control asthma, reduce the severity and frequency of attacks and help maintain a normal, active life.