

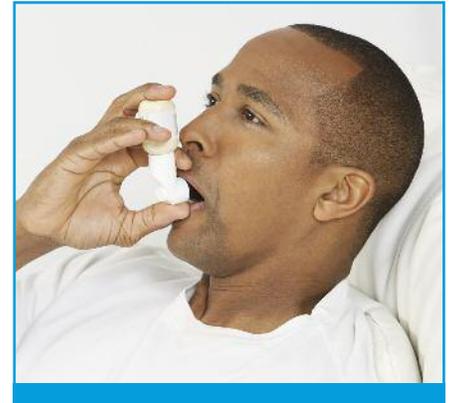
Asthma



What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the airways in the lungs. Asthma is a serious health problem, but it can be managed so you can live a normal, healthy life. When you have asthma, tubes that bring air to the lungs become swollen making it harder to breathe. Coming in contact with triggers such as smoke, mold, or dust, can make it even harder to breathe. This can cause an asthma attack or flare-up. You are at higher risk for asthma if you:

- Wheezed and had respiratory infections as a child
- Have allergies or parents who have asthma
- Have an allergic skin condition called eczema
- Come into contact with certain chemicals or dust at work



What Are the Warning Signs of Asthma?

- Coughing that gets worse at night or early in the morning
- A whistling or creaking sound when you breathe, called wheezing
- Chest tightness that feels like your chest is being squeezed
- Feeling like you can't catch your breath or feeling out of breath.



How Is Asthma Diagnosed?

Your doctor will examine you and listen to your breathing using a stethoscope. A simple breathing test called spirometry can check how well your lungs are working. Spirometry measures how much air you can breathe out and how fast you can breathe out after taking a very deep breath.



How Is Asthma Treated?

Your doctor may prescribe two types of medicine. One type you take every day to prevent asthma attacks. The other type you take to quickly relieve symptoms during an attack. Make sure you understand how to take your medicines and ask your doctor or other health professional if you have questions. A personalized asthma action plan can help you learn when to take medicines, how to keep your asthma under control, and when to get emergency help. You should stop smoking and also try to avoid what makes your asthma worse, such as dust fumes or animals.

Asthma



Questions for My Doctor

- What can I do to reduce my risk of an asthma attack?
- Is it safe to exercise with asthma?
- What is the best way to treat asthma?
- Why do I need an asthma action plan?
- What can I do in my home to reduce asthma attacks?
- What should I do if I have an asthma attack?
- When should I get emergency help?
- How will asthma affect my health over time?



Bottom Line

- Asthma is an airway disease of the lungs that can make it hard to breathe.
- Warning signs include coughing, wheezing, and feeling like you can't catch your breath.
- Your doctor will discuss your symptoms and listen to your lungs. A test called spirometry may be performed to measure how well your lungs are working.
- You may take one type of medicine to prevent an asthma attack, and another to relieve symptoms quickly during an asthma attack. There are different medicines for asthma. Talk to you doctor about which medicines are best for you.
- An asthma action plan can help you manage your asthma, know when to take medicines and when to get emergency help.

For More Information

- **ACP:** www.acponline.org/patients_families/products/watch_videos/
- **National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute:** www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/asthma/have_asthma.htm
- **Medline Plus:** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/asthma.html

Notes:
