

Preventing Attacks

Although many people with asthma rely on medications to relieve symptoms and control inflammation, you can do several things on your own to maintain overall health and lessen the possibility of attacks.

- **Use your air conditioner.** Air conditioning helps reduce the amount of airborne pollen from trees, grasses and weeds that finds its way indoors.
- **Decontaminate your decor.** Minimize dust that may aggravate nighttime symptoms by replacing certain items in your bedroom. For example, encase pillows, mattresses and box springs in dust-proof covers. Use washable curtains and blinds.
- **Maintain optimal humidity.** Keep humidity low in your home and office. If you live in a damp climate, talk to your doctor about using a dehumidifier.
- **Keep indoor air clean.** Have a utility company check your air conditioner and furnace once a year.
- **Reduce pet dander.** If you're allergic to dander, avoid pets with fur or feathers. Having pets regularly bathed or groomed also may reduce the amount of dander in your surroundings.
- **Clean regularly.** Clean your home at least once a week. If you're likely to stir up dust, wear a mask or have someone else do the cleaning.
- **If it's cold out, cover your face.** If your asthma is worsened by cold, dry air, wearing a face mask can help.

CU Healthy

HCS wants to CU Healthy! The Health Promotion Team at HCS tries to achieve this through our:

- Resource Centre
- Student Peer Interns
- Health Promotion Advisory Committee
- Website (carleton.ca/health)
- Facebook page
- Newsletters, class presentations, workshops and more . . .

The Health Promotion Team promotes healthy lifestyles and wellness and can provide you with information about stress, colds, nutrition, sexuality, alcohol, etc. Contact the Resource Centre for more information at 613-520-2600 ext. 6544 or cu_healthy@carleton.ca.



2600 CTTC Building
613-520-6674
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Asthma



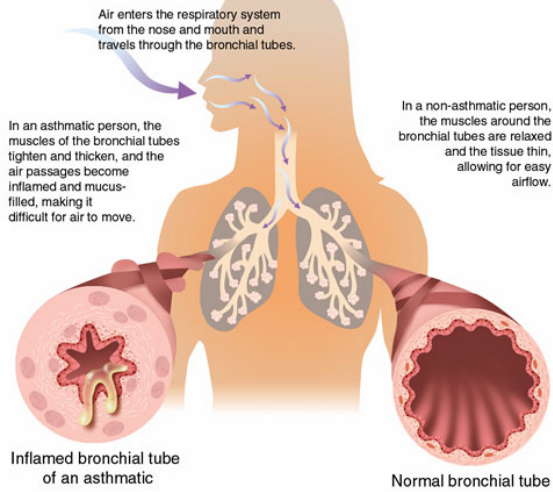
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What is asthma?

Asthma is an inflammatory disease of the lungs. The airways of people with asthma are extra sensitive to things that they're allergic to (allergens) and to other irritating things in the air (irritants).

Asthma symptoms start when allergens or other irritants cause the lining of the airways to swell (become inflamed) and narrow. The muscles around the airways can then spasm, causing the airways to narrow even more. When the lining of the airways is inflamed, it produces more mucus. The mucus clogs the airways and further blocks the flow of air.

Why asthma makes it hard to breathe



Source: American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

Symptoms

Signs and symptoms range from minor to severe, and vary from person to person. Between episodes you may feel normal and have no trouble breathing. Or, you may have signs and symptoms such as coughing and wheezing all the time or have symptoms primarily at night or only during exercise.

Asthma signs and symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness or pain
- Trouble sleeping caused by shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing
- An audible whistling or wheezing sound when exhaling
- Bouts of coughing or wheezing that are worsened by a respiratory virus such as a cold or the flu

Causes

It isn't clear why some people get asthma and others don't, but it is probably due to a combination of environmental and genetic factors. Asthma triggers are different from person to person. Exposure to various allergens and irritants can trigger signs and symptoms of asthma, including:

- Airborne allergens such as pollen, animal dander, mold, cockroaches and dust mites
- Respiratory infections, such as the common cold
- Physical activity (exercise-induced asthma)
- Cold air
- Air pollutants and irritants such as smoke
- Certain medications
- Strong emotions and stress
- Allergic reactions to food such as peanuts or shellfish



Treatment

Treatment generally involves avoiding the things that trigger your asthma attacks and taking one or more asthma medications.

- Most people with persistent asthma use a combination of long-term control medications and quick-relief medications, taken with a hand-held inhaler.
- If your asthma symptoms are triggered by airborne allergens you may also need allergy treatment.
- You may need to try a few different medications before you find what works best.
- Because asthma changes over time, you will need to work with your doctor to monitor your symptoms and learn how to make needed adjustments.

Medications used to treat asthma include long-term control medications, quick-relief (rescue) medications and medications to treat allergies. The right medication for you depends on your age and symptoms, and what seems to work best to keep your asthma under control.

* The CU Healthy Program gratefully acknowledges the Mayo Clinic as a resource for the information in this brochure