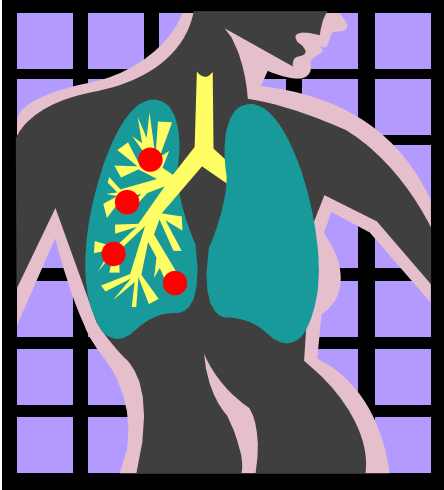


# ALL ABOUT ASTHMA



Asthma is a chronic lung condition. In asthma, muscle spasms and swelling in the branches of the windpipe (the bronchi) that carry air to and from the lungs constrict your airways and block the flow of air. As a result, you have to gasp for breath.

Asthma attacks may come on suddenly and they can last from 15 minutes to more than a day. Frequently they are triggered by allergies in the air, including pollen, dust, mold or animal dander. In addition, smoke, exercise, cold air, foods, emotional upset, a cold, and impaired lung muscles can cause an asthma attack. In a small percentage of people, Aspirin can also cause an attack.

Asthma frequently begins in childhood. It is more common among African-American children. Many children outgrow the illness, but it can reappear when they reach adulthood.

Severe, untreated asthma can be fatal. But most people can control their asthma by taking medications and avoiding the things that cause an attack.

## **Early Warning Signs of an Asthma Attack:**

Early warning signs are experienced before the start of an asthma attack. By learning the early signs, you can begin early treatment before complications develop. Early warning signs may be the same, similar or entirely different with each episode. Examples of early warning signs include:

Breathing Changes  
Sneezing  
Coughing  
Moodiness

Headaches  
Runny/stuffy nose  
Chin or throat itches  
Feeling tired

Dark circles under the eyes  
Trouble sleeping  
Poor tolerance for exercise  
Tightness in the chest

## **Severe Asthma Symptoms:**

- So much difficulty breathing that you sweat
- Your heart races
- You feel panic

## What Can I do if I am experiencing an asthma attack?

- Stay calm. Anxiety will make the attack worse.
- Don't lie down. You will be able to breathe better if you sit up and lean forward.
- Use the medications your doctor prescribed. Make sure you write down the time you took the medicine. When you are having an attack, it may be difficult to remember.

## When should I call my doctor?

### **Call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately if:**

- If you notice any of the following signs of lack of oxygen:
  - ✓ A suffocating feeling that makes talking difficult
  - ✓ Flaring nostrils
  - ✓ A sucked in look to the skin between the ribs when inhaling.
  - ✓ Blue lips and nails

### Call your doctor for an immediate appointment:

- The first time anyone in your family has severe or prolonged wheezing, coughing, or difficulty breathing.
- If your asthma medicine doesn't work in the time it is supposed to.
- If you cough up green, yellow, or bloody mucus.
- If you feel new symptoms. This may be a side effect of the medications you are on or it may mean that your asthma is getting worse.

### **Facts about Asthma:**

- ✓ Asthma is a chronic lung condition that **can develop at any age.**
- ✓ Asthma occurs in 7-10% of the pediatric population.
- ✓ Asthma is the most common chronic respiratory disease in children.
- ✓ In children, twice as many boys as girls have asthma. In the teenage years, more girls than boys develop asthma. However, in the adult years, the ratio is 50/50. Today, 10 million adults have asthma.

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