

# ASTHMA

---

## What is Asthma

Asthma is a long-term lung disease that causes episodes of coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath.

If you have asthma, you may cough and wheeze when your airways narrow during an asthma episode, which makes breathing more difficult. Your lungs' inside airway walls may swell and become irritated. Mucous may be overproduced by membranes in the lining of your airways. Asthma attacks are the end effect.

Mild, severe, and occasionally fatal symptoms can occur. Asthma cannot be cured, like all chronic illnesses, although it is typically extremely controllable.

## Symptoms

People experience asthma symptoms differently. You might only experience symptoms occasionally, such as when exercising, or experience symptoms all the time. Some symptoms are:

- Wheezing, coughing and chest tightness becoming severe and constant
- Coughing or wheezing attacks that are worsened by a respiratory virus, such as a cold or the flu
- Wheezing when exhaling
- Being too breathless to eat, speak or sleep
- A fast heartbeat
- Drowsiness, exhaustion, confusion, dizziness
- Blue lips/fingers
- Fainting

## Triggers

Various irritants can **trigger** asthma:

- Airborne substances e.g., pollen, mould spores, cockroach waste, particles of skin and dried saliva shed by pets, dust mites
- Stress
- Physical activity
- Air pollutants e.g., chemical fumes, gases, smoke
- Cold air

- Certain medications e.g., aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, beta blockers
- Food/drink preservatives

### **Seek Emergency Treatment**

Life-threatening asthma attacks can occur. Together, you and your doctor can decide what to do if your signs and symptoms worsen or if you require emergency care.

#### **Emergency signs:**

- Wheezing or shortness of breath rapidly getting worse
- Even after using a quick-relief inhaler, there was no improvement
- You get breathless even when you engage in light physical activity

#### **See Your Doctor:**

- If you think you have asthma
- If you experience persistent wheezing or frequent coughing, or if you experience any other asthmatic signs or symptoms. Early asthma treatment may help avoid long-term lung damage and slow the progression of the condition.
- To find the ideal treatment for you. Working with your doctor will help you control your asthma if you are aware that you have it. A life-threatening asthma attack can be avoided with good long-term control, which also improves your day-to-day well-being.
- Once your asthma has been diagnosed, work with your doctor to control this condition. Good long-term control improves your day-to-day well-being and can stop a life-threatening asthma attack.
- Do not attempt to treat your asthma symptoms by taking more medication without first talking to your doctor. If your symptoms worsen, your medication doesn't appear to be helping, or you need to use your quick-relief inhaler more frequently. Overusing asthma medications can have negative side effects and can aggravate asthma.

Since asthma frequently varies over time, your treatment will need to be adjusted too. Discuss your symptoms and any necessary treatment adjustments with your doctor on a frequent basis.