

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic, obstructive lung condition that is characterised by inflammation, increased mucus production, and narrowing of the airways due to tightening of the muscles in the airways. This combination of problems leads to less air moving through the lungs making it difficult to breathe.

The incidence of asthma is increasing each year, especially in children

Asthma can be caused by a variety of triggers. Everyone's lungs are sensitive to different stimuli, so there is no single cause of asthma, but it may be partly an inherited condition. Asthmatics have lungs that are more sensitive to stimuli. Asthma is partially the lung's allergic response to an allergen. Common allergens include:

- Animal dander
- Pollen
- Dust or moulds
- Medications
- Foods ex: nuts
- Preservatives

Asthma typically develops in childhood, but adults can also become asthmatic due to prolonged exposure to certain allergens or non-allergic irritants such as:

- Chemicals or detergents
- Smoke
- Strong smells (perfumes or cleaning agents)
- Viral infections (like the flu)

Some symptoms (or indicators) of asthma include wheezing, chest tightness, coughing or shortness of breath. Not everyone may have all of the symptoms; some may have just one or two. The occurrence of these symptoms at night is usually an indication of more severe asthma.

While there is no cure for asthma, it is a very manageable condition. The goals of asthma management are to be as symptom free as possible, being able to engage in normal activities, using rescue medications fewer than 4 doses per week, having daytime symptoms fewer than 4 times per week and reducing instances of worsening asthma.

The best ways to manage your asthma are to avoid triggers, talking to your pharmacist or doctor about creating an action plan to tell if your asthma is in control or getting worse, talking to your pharmacist about, and using, your controller and reliever medications properly. While avoiding the triggers that can cause asthma is an important part of managing the condition, it is not always possible to do so. Proper knowledge about the medications that are often needed to prevent and treat the symptoms and how/when to use them, is equally important.

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