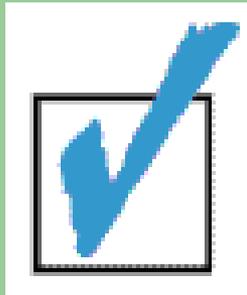


What You Need to Know About Asthma

*Going for the 3 Increases: Increase in Health, Increase in Happiness
& Increase in Energy*

Strategies for
Success in Health
Management

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What is Asthma?

- Asthma is a lung disorder that interferes with breathing
- It can cause serious, recurring episodes of wheezing and breathlessness, known as asthma attacks
- The trouble stems from chronic inflammation in the tubes that carry air to the lungs
- While there is no cure, there are highly effective strategies for keeping asthma symptoms at bay



Asthma Symptoms

- Asthma is characterized by inflammation of the bronchial tubes with increased production of sticky secretions inside the tubes
- People with asthma experience symptoms when the airways tighten, inflame, or fill with mucus

Common asthma symptoms include:

- Coughing, especially at night
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness, pain, or pressure



Every Person with Asthma Experiences Symptoms Differently

- A person may not have all of these symptoms
- A person may have different symptoms at different times
- A person's asthma symptoms may also vary from one asthma attack to the next, being mild during one & severe during another
- Some people with asthma may go for extended periods without having any symptoms, interrupted by periodic worsening of their symptoms called asthma attacks
- Others might have asthma symptoms every day
- Some people may only have asthma during exercise, or asthma with viral infections like colds.



Mild Asthma Attacks

- Mild asthma attacks are generally more common
- Usually, the airways open up within a few minutes to a few hours
- Severe attacks are less common but last longer and require immediate medical help
- It is important to recognize & treat even mild asthma symptoms to help people prevent severe episodes & keep asthma under better control



Early Warning Signs of Asthma

- Early warning signs are changes that happen just before or at the very beginning of an asthma attack
- These signs may start before the well-known symptoms of asthma & are the earliest signs that asthma is worsening
- In general, these signs are not severe enough to stop one from going about one's daily activities
- But by recognizing these signs, one can stop an asthma attack or prevent one from getting worse
- If one has early warning signs or symptoms of asthma, one should take more asthma medication as described in one's asthma action plan



Early Symptoms of Asthma

Early warning signs of asthma include:

- Frequent cough, especially at night
- Losing breath easily or shortness of breath
- Feeling very tired or weak when exercising
- Wheezing or coughing after exercise
- Feeling tired, easily upset, grouchy, or moody
- Decreases or changes in lung function as measured on a peak flow meter
- Signs of a cold or allergies (sneezing, runny nose, cough, nasal congestion, sore throat, and headache)
- Trouble sleeping



Know the Symptoms of Asthma

- An asthma attack is an episode in which bands of muscle surrounding the airways are triggered to tighten
- This tightening is called **bronchospasm**
- During the attack, the lining of the airways becomes swollen or inflamed and the cells lining the airways produce more & thicker mucus than normal.
- All of these factors -- bronchospasm, inflammation, and mucus production -- cause symptoms such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and difficulty performing normal daily activities



Other Symptoms of Asthma include:

- Severe wheezing when breathing both in and out
- Coughing that won't stop
- Very rapid breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Tightened neck & chest muscles, called retractions
- Difficulty talking
- Feelings of anxiety or panic
- Pale, sweaty face
- Blue lips or fingernails



Unusual Asthma Symptoms

These symptoms may not appear to be related to asthma:

- rapid breathing
- sighing
- fatigue
- inability to exercise properly (called exercise-induced asthma)
- difficulty sleeping or nighttime asthma
- anxiety
- difficulty concentrating
- chronic cough without wheezing



When to seek Emergency Care

Some asthma attacks require emergency treatment.
Call 911 if:

- Person is too breathless to walk or talk
- Person's lips or fingernails look blue
- Using a rescue inhaler doesn't help

These are signs that the body is not getting enough oxygen

Emergency treatment can help open the airways & restore oxygen levels



Asthma Triggers: Allergies

Allergens that can trigger an asthma attack include:

- Mold
- Dust mites
- Cockroaches
- Pollen from trees or flowers
- Foods such as peanuts, eggs, fish
- If pollen is one of a person's triggers, the person will probably notice asthma symptoms are worse at certain times of year



Asthma Triggers: Pets

- Pet allergies are another common asthma trigger
- The problem is dander dead skin cells that collect on clothing, furniture, and walls
- When pet dander is inhaled, it can cause an asthma attack in as little as 15 minutes
- People with cat allergies react to a protein in the cat's saliva, skin, and urine
- This protein accumulates in the air or on surfaces and can trigger asthma attacks in 20% to 30% of people with asthma.



Asthma Triggers: Air Pollution

- Outdoor and indoor air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse

Top irritants include:

- Smog
- Cigarette smoke
- Paint fumes
- Hairspray

These are known as non-allergic asthma triggers

- They don't cause an allergic reaction, but can prompt an asthma attack by irritating the airways



Asthma Triggers: Exercise

- The health benefits of regular exercise are extensive and well-documented
- But physical activity can also trigger asthma symptoms in many people
- This is sometimes called exercise-induced asthma. Fortunately, this doesn't mean a person has to give up exercise.
- There are ways to control asthma so it won't interfere with the activities these people enjoy.



Asthma Triggers: Weather

- People with asthma may notice that symptoms get worse during certain types of weather
- When the temperature drops, the chances of having an asthma attack may go up
- Other triggers include air that is extremely humid or very dry



Who Gets Asthma?

- Asthma can appear at any age, but it typically develops during childhood
- Those most at risk include people with allergies or a family history of asthma
- Having a parent with asthma makes children more likely to develop the condition

Gender also plays a role

- Asthma is more common in boys during childhood
- but in women during adulthood



Asthma and Smoking

- Several studies suggest that adults & teenagers who smoke are more likely to develop asthma
- There is strong evidence to incriminate secondhand smoke as well
- Kids who are around people who smoke have a higher chance of getting asthma early in life



Asthma and Obesity

- Asthma is also more common in people who are overweight or obese
- The CDC found the obesity rate among adults with asthma to be at almost 39% while the obesity rate among adults without asthma was almost 27%



Managing Asthma: Avoiding Triggers

- First step in controlling asthma is to identify and avoid one's triggers
- This may mean staying indoors when the smog index is high or getting special bedding to combat dust mites
- Most effective way to fight allergens in the home is to remove the source, which may include pets, carpets, and upholstered furniture
- Dusting regularly and using a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter may also help



Managing Asthma: Allergy Shots

- If a person can't avoid some of the allergens that cause asthma attacks, the doctor may recommend allergy shots
- These shots help desensitize the person to particular triggers and may lessen asthma symptoms
- An allergist can help determine which shots are right for the person



Managing Asthma: Long-Term Medication

- It is virtually impossible for people with asthma to avoid all their triggers all the time
- For this reason, many people need to take daily medication to prevent asthma attacks
- Inhaled corticosteroids are the most common medication for the long-term control of asthma
- They work by reducing inflammation in the airways, making them less sensitive to irritants in the air



Quick Relief for Asthma Attacks

- Even with the use of long-term medication, asthma symptoms sometimes flare up. When this happens, one will need another type of inhaler to provide quick relief
- Short-acting beta2-agonists are the most common choice
- These rescue inhalers quickly relax the tightened muscles around the airways, restoring the flow of air to the lungs
- Most asthma attacks respond to this medication, eliminating the need for a hospital visit



Using a Peak Flow Meter

- To determine whether one's asthma is under control, the doctor will probably recommend using a peak flow meter
- The person blows into the device, and it measures how well air is moving out of the lungs
- Changes in peak flow score can help warn that an asthma attack might occur soon



Asthma Action Plan

- Most people with asthma are able to keep the condition under control
- The key is to play an active role in developing a treatment strategy
- One must sit down with one's doctor to develop an asthma action plan
- This plan will identify one's triggers, list one's daily medications, and outline what to do when one has a flare-up. By following the plan (and adjusting it when needed), one may be able to eliminate most of one's asthma symptoms