



What is asthma and what can you do about it?

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease that can make it hard for you to breathe at times. Asthma affects the airways that carry the air you breathe down into your lungs. When you have asthma, your airways can get irritated and swollen. This can lead to an asthma attack.

What is an asthma attack?

An asthma attack is a serious problem with breathing. When you have an asthma attack, it's hard to get enough air into and out of your lungs. Your chest feels tight. You may cough and wheeze ("wheeze" means making noise when you breathe). Coughing and wheezing might wake you up at night.

What causes asthma?

No one really knows what causes asthma. You can get asthma at any age. Once you have asthma, it doesn't go away, although it may get much better at times. There is no cure for asthma, but there are ways to keep it under control.

What can you do to help keep your asthma under control?

- **Take your "daily control" asthma medicine every day.** Your daily control medicine helps keep you from having asthma attacks.
- **When you have an asthma attack, use your "rescue" medicine.** Your rescue medicine gives you quick relief when you are having an asthma attack.
- **Try to stay away from the things that cause your asthma attacks.** Things that cause asthma attacks are called asthma "triggers." Asthma triggers are different for each person with asthma.
- **See your doctor for checkups and any time your asthma gets worse.** You should see your doctor at least twice a year for regular checkups. Your doctor also needs to know whenever you are having problems with asthma.

If you have asthma, can you still have a normal, active life?

Yes. When you keep your asthma under control, you can have a normal, active life. You can work, play, and sleep well at night.



Warning signs of possible problems with asthma

Warning signs

If you have any of these warning signs, call your doctor:

- You are having asthma attacks more often, or your asthma attacks are getting worse.
- You are using your rescue medicine for asthma attacks *more than once a week*.
- You are waking up in the night coughing and wheezing from asthma *more than once a month*.
- When you have a cold or other illness that affects breathing, it lasts *longer than usual*.
- You are having problems breathing during physical activity or exercise.

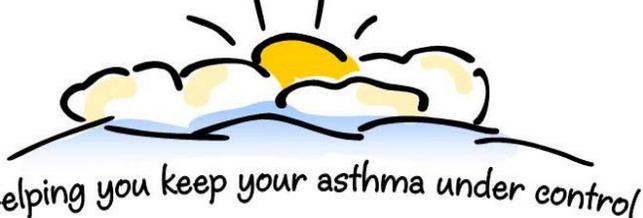
What do these warning signs mean?

These signs can mean that asthma is getting out of control, and something needs to be done. If you have any of the warning signs, talk with your doctor:

- Find out what the warning sign means for you and what to do.
- Don't wait long to call your doctor – it's important to get your asthma back under control. When your asthma is under control, you will breathe better and feel better.

What can cause these warning signs?

- It's possible that your daily control medicine is not working as well as it should, and it needs to be changed.
- Maybe you have been around your asthma triggers more often. Or you might be getting more sensitive to your triggers, or getting some new ones. (Asthma "triggers" are the things that cause asthma problems for you).
- There are many other possible reasons for these warning signs. If you have one or more of the warning signs, talk with your doctor about what it means and what to do.



What to do when you have an asthma attack

Your rescue medicine

Your rescue medicine is _____

Keep this rescue medicine with you all the time in case you have an asthma attack.

Is your asthma attack an emergency?

When you have an asthma attack, use your rescue medicine. It will usually help right away. But asthma attacks can be very serious. They can turn into emergencies at any time. So whenever you have an asthma attack, keep watching for the warning signs of an asthma emergency.

Warning signs of an emergency

Call 911 for medical help if you have *even just one* of these warning signs:

- You are breathing so hard that you have trouble walking or talking.
- or -- your lips or fingernails are looking gray or blue.
- or -- your rescue medicine is not helping, even after you have followed the directions for using it.

How to use your rescue medicine

- 1** When you have an asthma attack, take _____ puffs of your rescue medicine right away.
- 2** Sit down and stay as calm and quiet as you can. Do your best to relax, because relaxing will make it easier for you to breathe.
- 3** If you don't feel better within _____ minutes, take _____ more puffs of rescue medicine. *More instructions:*

- 4** If you *still* don't feel any better after _____ more minutes, call 911 for emergency medical help.

If you are having asthma attacks more than once a week, call your doctor

Having asthma attacks this often can mean that your asthma is getting out of control, and something needs to be done.