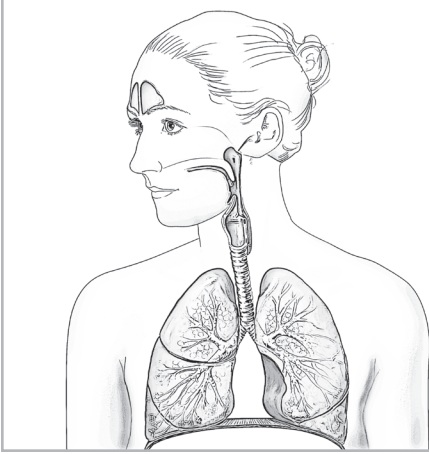


Asthma



When you have asthma, you have trouble breathing at certain times.

These times are called flare-ups. During a flare-up, your airways become swollen and make extra mucus so there isn't as much space for air to flow through. The muscles that wrap around your airways can also tighten. When all this happens, it makes it difficult for you to breathe.

Asthma can be serious, but if you work with your doctor to treat and manage it, you can enjoy a healthy life.

Asthma Symptoms

Asthma is a chronic condition. This means you'll always have it, but you may only have symptoms during a flare-up. Asthma symptoms can range from mild to severe. They include:

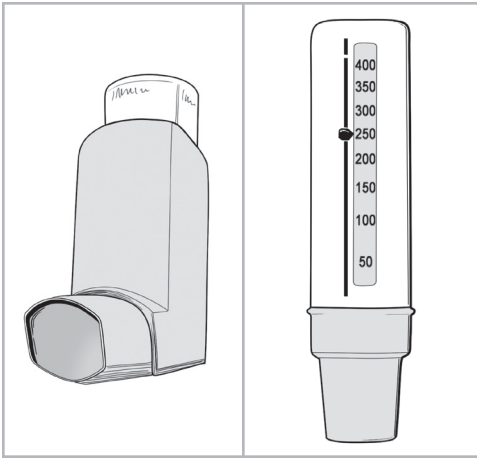
- trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- chest tightness or pain
- a whistling or wheezing sound when you breathe
- frequent colds
- frequent cough (with or without coughing up mucus)
- bouts of very bad wheezing or coughing (made worse by a cold or flu)

Talk to your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms. Getting treatment for your asthma can help prevent flare-ups and long-term damage to your lungs.

Know Your Triggers

Triggers can bring on an asthma flare-up. To figure out what triggers your asthma, keep track of where you are and what you are doing when you have flare-ups. Then, try to avoid those triggers whenever possible. Triggers may include:

- **Respiratory infections**—including cold, flu and sinus infection.
Prevention tip: Wash your hands frequently and get your yearly flu shot.
- **Allergens**—including pollen, mold, dust mites and pets. The same things that cause allergy symptoms can also trigger asthma.
Prevention tip: Talk to your doctor about treating your allergies.
- **Irritants**—including cigarette smoke, wood smoke, perfumes, cleaning products and chemicals, air pollution and fumes.
Prevention tip: Don't smoke, stay away from others who smoke, and limit time outside when pollution levels are high. You can check local pollution levels at www.aaaai.org/nab.
- **Weather**—including cold air, high humidity and seasonal changes.
Prevention tip: Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier to lower indoor humidity, and cover your nose and mouth in cold weather.
- **Exercise**—especially high-impact moves, which make you breathe fast.
Prevention tip: Don't give up on exercise! Instead, talk to your doctor if exercise triggers flare-ups.
- **Stress and strong emotion**—including anxiety, crying, yelling and even laughing hard, which causes deep, rapid breathing.
Prevention tip: Try taking a few deep breaths to calm yourself. Breathe in and count to 10. Repeat.



Treatment Options

Because there is no cure for asthma, your treatment goal is to prevent flare-ups. Your doctor will recommend the treatment options that are best for you. There are two main types of asthma medicine:

- 1. Preventive medicines**—also called long-term controller medicines. They work over time to reduce swelling in your airways, helping you have fewer and milder flare-ups. You usually take preventive medicines every day, even if you aren't having symptoms.
- 2. Quick-relief medicines**—also called rescue medicines. They work to quickly open swollen airways to relieve your symptoms during a flare-up. But they don't give you long-term relief or prevent future flare-ups.

Most people take a combination of preventive and quick-relief medicines. Even if you take a preventive medicine, you'll still need your quick-relief medicine in case of a flare-up.



To learn more, visit **HealthyAdvice.com/AsthmaMakeover**

You can also visit these websites:

- **American Academy of Family Physicians**
www.familydoctor.org
- **American Lung Association**
www.lungusa.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov

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What You Can Do

To help control your asthma:

- **Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.** Don't stop taking any medicine without talking to your doctor first. Tell your doctor if you have side effects or if you are using your quick-relief medicine more than two days a week.
- **Avoid triggers.**
- **Monitor your breathing.** Use a peak flow meter, a handheld device that measures how well air is flowing from your lungs. Check your airflow regularly (ask your doctor how often), and write down the results. This can tell you if your asthma is getting worse—even before you feel symptoms—so you take action before you have a full-blown flare-up.
- **Exercise regularly.** Aim for 30 minutes on most days. This can improve asthma by strengthening your heart and lungs.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight can make your symptoms worse. Talk to your doctor about steps to reach a healthy weight.
- **Create an asthma action plan.** List your peak flow numbers, triggers, medicines and emergency contact information. Get tips for using an asthma action plan at **HealthyAdvice.com/UseActionPlan**.

Remember:

- See your doctor if you have symptoms.
- Know which triggers cause flare-ups and try to avoid them.
- Take your medicine as prescribed. Take preventive medicines even if you don't feel symptoms.
- Work with your doctor to create an asthma action plan.