

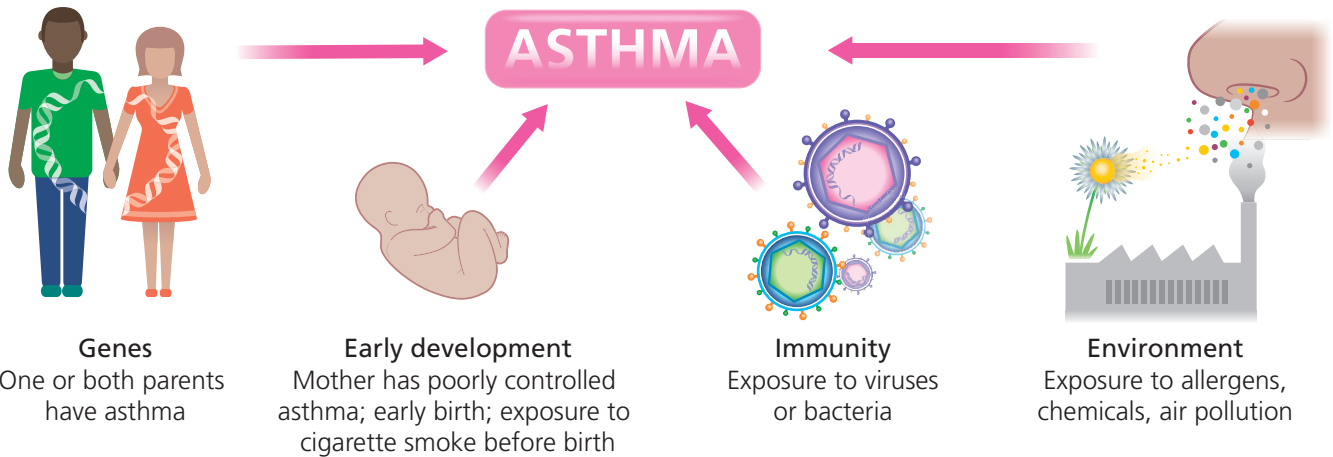
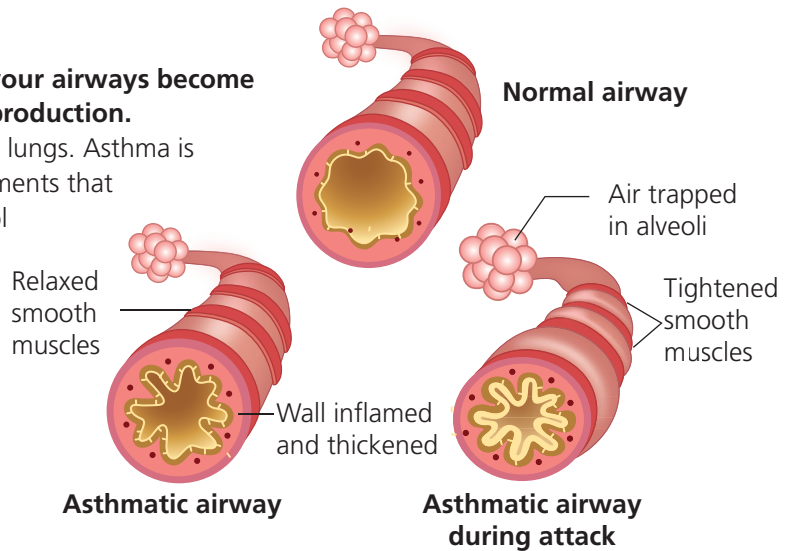
# Asthma

**Asthma is a long-term (chronic) condition in which your airways become inflamed and swollen, often with too much mucus production.**

This reduces the amount of air flowing in and out of your lungs. Asthma is not a curable disease but there are many successful treatments that control the symptoms, even if you have difficult-to-control or severe asthma.

## What causes asthma?

The exact cause of asthma is unknown, but there are a number of risk factors that increase the likelihood of asthma developing. They are often different from the "triggers" that bring on an asthma attack or cause asthma to worsen.



## What are the triggers of asthma?

Certain triggers, like pollen, viral infections or pet fur, can make the symptoms of asthma worse. It is important you identify the triggers that affect you. Once you know what your triggers are you can try to reduce your contact with them. This will reduce your risk of attacks and help you to manage your asthma better!

### Allergens

- Molds
- Animal dander
- Dust mites
- Foods
- Pollens
- Latex

### Irritants

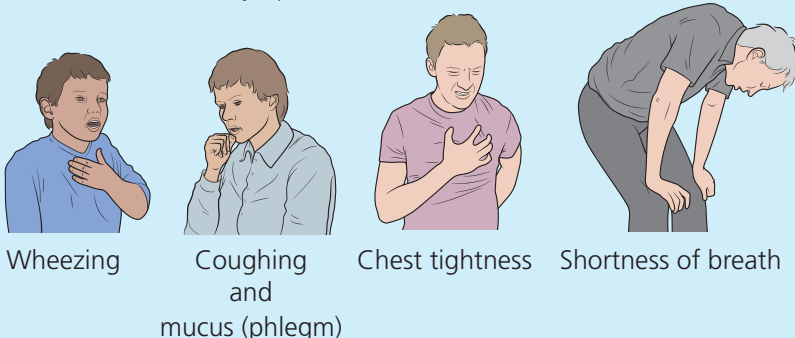
- Cigarette smoke
- Cold air
- High humidity
- Temperature change
- Aerosol sprays
- Paint/diesel fumes

### Non-allergen/irritant

- Exercise
- Drugs
- Infection

## What are the symptoms of asthma?

The most common symptoms of asthma are:



Narrow inflamed airways can cause other unusual symptoms:

- Frequent sighing and rapid breathing
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating through the day
- Persistent tiredness

All of these symptoms can occur in other diseases, even when the main organ affected is not the lungs. That is why it is so important to test for asthma, to make sure you get the right diagnosis and treatment.

## How to prevent an asthma attack?

- Take your preventer medication as prescribed
- Have a personalized written Asthma Action Plan
- Avoid triggers
- Record your symptoms and peak flow readings between asthma reviews
- Maintain good health and fitness
- Get a yearly flu vaccine
- Stop smoking.

## How to manage an asthma attack?

Despite appropriate treatment and good self-management, asthma attacks still happen. It is important that you know the signs and symptoms of an attack, you can recognize how severe it is, and you know what to do when one happens. These steps should be clearly shown on your Asthma Action Plan, and you should also talk to your doctor about this so that you know what medications to take.

## The Asthma Action Plan

Your doctor will give you a written Asthma Action Plan and organize lung function testing for your asthma so that you know:

- When and how often to take your preventer treatment.
- How to tell if your symptoms are getting worse.
- What to do when your symptoms get worse.

You should aim to be in the **Green** zone most of the time.

## How to help yourself?

- Take your inhaled preventer medication correctly at the right times
- Put a written Asthma Action Plan in place with your doctor:
  - Know your triggers
  - Know what medications you are taking and when
  - Know how to recognize if your asthma is getting worse
  - Know what to do if you have an attack
- Book regular asthma reviews. Have at least one review a year.
- Stay active
- Lose weight
- Eat well
- Sleep well
- Be prepared when traveling.

## How is asthma treated

Asthma is usually treated with medication that is delivered directly to your airways by an inhaler. There are two types of asthma inhaler:

- **Relievers** widen the airways, increase the air flow to the lungs and relieve asthma symptoms. They are taken as and when you need them.
- **Preventers** stop inflammation and prevent symptoms and asthma attacks. They are taken every day.

A combination of a long-acting reliever and an inhaled steroid can also be used to relieve (as well as prevent) symptoms.

### Green

means you are feeling well and your asthma is under control.

### Actions

- Keep taking your preventer medication as prescribed
- Always carry your reliever with you. Take it when you need to
- Stay active. Take your reliever medication before exercise
- Ask your doctor about spacers
- Avoid triggers.

### Orange

means you are feeling less well and your asthma is worse.

### Actions

- Increase use of your reliever medication, as needed. Use a spacer with puffers
- Increase use of your preventer and start oral steroids as prescribed (usually for 5 days for adults and 3 days for children)
- Beware of the first signs of a cold – colds and other nose/throat viruses can worsen symptoms and cause serious attacks
- Get an asthma review.

### Red

means you are having an asthma attack.

### Actions

- Use your reliever with a spacer if using a puffer
- Start oral steroids as prescribed
- Seek medical attention.