

Focus on:

# Asthma

REFERENCE



Asthma is a condition affecting the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. Asthma makes the airways very sensitive. When the airways are irritated, they get narrower and less air flows through them to your lungs. This can cause wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and difficulty breathing. While asthma cannot be cured, it can be controlled, making your symptoms minimal and attacks less frequent.

## What are common causes of asthma attacks?

Dust mites, pet dander, infections from a cold or the flu, cigarette smoke or exercise are just some of the things that can cause asthma attacks in some people.

## Who is at risk for asthma?

Usually, people who have asthma also have allergies. Family history also plays a part in who has asthma. While asthma affects people of all ages, it typically begins in childhood. Nearly one-third of all people in the U.S. with asthma are children.

## What are the symptoms of asthma?

- > Coughing
- > Wheezing
- > Chest tightness
- > Shortness of breath
- > Fast or noisy breathing

## How can I prevent an asthma attack?

While asthma cannot be cured, symptoms can be prevented by:

- > Learning about your asthma
- > Vacuuming frequently to limit the amount of dust and pet dander
- > Taking your asthma medications as directed by your doctor
- > Following your asthma action plan outlined by your doctor



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## TIPS



### How Is Asthma Treated?

Your doctor can work with you to decide about your treatment goals and what you need to do to control your asthma to achieve these goals. Asthma treatment includes:

- > Using asthma medicines. Allergy medicine and shots may also help control asthma in some people. There are also long-term medicines and quick-relief medicines. You and your doctor can decide what is best for you.
- > Avoiding things that bring on your asthma symptoms or make your symptoms worse. Doing so can reduce the amount of medicine you need to control your asthma.
- > Monitoring your asthma so that you can recognize when your symptoms are getting worse and respond quickly to prevent or stop an asthma attack.
- > Working closely with your doctor to decide what your treatment goals are and learning how to meet those goals.

With proper treatment, you should ideally have these results:

- > Your asthma should be controlled.
- > You should be free of asthma symptoms.
- > You should have fewer attacks.
- > You should require quick-relief medicines less often.
- > You should be able to do normal activities without having symptoms.

Your doctor will work with you to develop an asthma self-management plan for controlling your asthma on a daily basis and an emergency action plan for stopping asthma attacks. These plans will tell you what medicines you should take and other things you should do to keep your asthma under control.

### Treating Asthma in Children

Treatment may include allergy testing, finding ways to limit contact with things that bring on asthma attacks, and taking medicine. But just like treating asthma in adults, children should also seek treatment from a doctor.

Children who are younger will need help and guidance from their parents and other caregivers to keep their asthma under control. Older children can learn to care for themselves and follow their asthma self-management plan with less supervision.

Asthma medicines for children are like those for adults, but with smaller doses. Depending on the severity of the asthma, children may need both a quick-relief (or “rescue”) inhaler for attacks and daily medicine to control their

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asthma, or they may need to learn how to use a peak flow meter (a hand held instrument for measuring how fast a person can push air out of their lungs) to help keep their asthma under control.

Parents should be alert for possible signs of asthma in children. If you suspect that your child has asthma or that your child’s asthma is not well controlled, take your child to a doctor for an exam and testing.

### Treating Asthma in Older Adults

Older adults may need to adjust their asthma treatment because of other diseases or conditions that they have. Some medicines (like beta blockers used for treating high blood pressure and glaucoma; aspirin; and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) can interfere with asthma medicines or even cause asthma attacks. Be sure to tell your doctor about all medicines that you take, including over-the-counter ones.

**For more information about asthma and how it affects you or your child, please visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).**

**For more information about Nationwide Better Health visit [nwbetterhealth.com](http://nwbetterhealth.com). Or contact your benefits representative.**



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