

Live well with asthma



Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health

*Helping Western Australians
live their best life since 1964.*

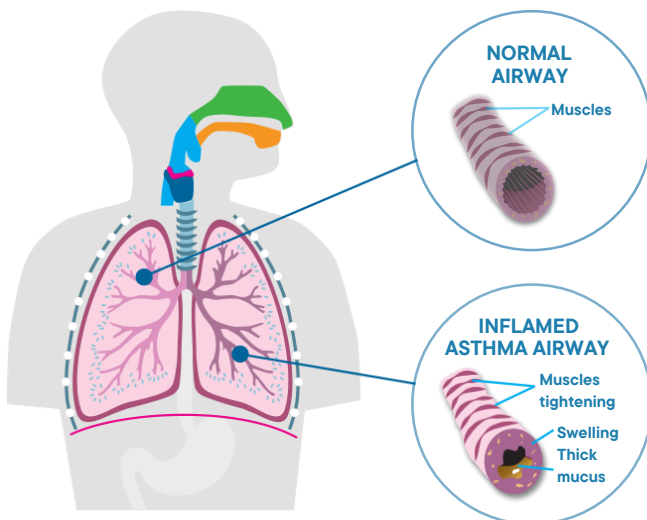
What is asthma?

Asthma is a long-term lung condition that affects a person's airways.

People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a 'flare-up'. During a flare-up the muscles around the airways squeeze tight and the inside of the airways become inflamed. This causes them to swell, become narrow and produce more mucus. These things make it harder to breathe.

An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days, or even weeks) or very quickly (within minutes). A sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack.

Asthma cannot be cured, but for most people it can be well controlled by following a daily management plan.



What causes asthma?

Asthma can affect anyone at any stage of their life. The causes of asthma are not entirely known however asthma is more likely if:

- You or close relatives have a history of asthma, eczema or allergies.
- Exposure to tobacco smoke as a baby or young child and/or smoking during pregnancy.
- A baby is born prematurely or has a low birth weight.
- You are exposed to pollution or chemicals

Research continues to explore the cause of asthma and develop new treatment and prevention options, while ultimately trying to find a cure.

What is asthma control?

Good asthma control means:

- Being able to do all your usual activities
- No asthma symptoms at night-time or on waking
- Daytime symptoms no more than 2 days per week
- Needing reliever on no more than 2 days per week

What are the symptoms of asthma?

Symptoms of asthma vary from person to person.

The most common symptoms are:



SHORTNESS OF BREATH



CHEST TIGHTNESS



WHEEZING



COUGHING

My Asthma Control Test

/25

Talking to your doctor about asthma

How is asthma diagnosed?

To help your doctor diagnose asthma, you should discuss:

- Your symptoms
- Family history of asthma and allergies
- Full past medical history including allergies, hay fever (allergic rhinitis), eczema
- Your lifestyle - smoking, exercise, weight
- Your general health
- Your work history

Lung function tests

Your doctor may also ask you to undertake a lung function (breathing) test. These non-invasive tests, including spirometry, measure how well your lungs work and help diagnose and manage respiratory conditions.

I have had a lung function test on _____

I am due for a lung function test on _____

Asthma reviews

Having an asthma check up every 6-12 months with your doctor will help your asthma management.

- Talk about any problems or issues with normal activities because of your asthma in the last month.
- Discuss any asthma flare-ups (asthma attack) in the last 12 months or presentations to the hospital for your asthma.
- Ask about lung function tests
- Discuss other health conditions and medications you take including complementary therapies
- Talk about your asthma medications - for example, are you taking your daily preventer as prescribed? And, how often have you needed to use your reliever?
- Take your asthma devices (inhalers) and check that you are using them correctly
- Update your Asthma Action Plan

My last asthma review was _____

My next asthma review is due _____

Know your triggers

Asthma symptoms may be set off by triggers, which can be different for each person.

Taking your preventer medication every day as prescribed is the best way to help your airways cope well with any asthma triggers.

Identifying and avoiding triggers where possible can help to control your asthma.

Have you noticed that your asthma symptoms flare-up with some of these common triggers?

- Exercise/physical activity
- Colds and flu
- Allergens: animals, house dust mites, moulds, pollens
- Poor air quality: smoke, dusty environments, traffic, cleaning products, scents
- Weather: cold, dry, humid, thunderstorms, sudden changes
- Medications
- Emotions: stress, laughter, anxiety
- Food and additives
- Medical conditions: gastro-oesophageal reflux disease, obesity, hormonal changes



Asthma and allergic rhinitis

Allergic rhinitis (commonly known as hayfever) is an allergic reaction to allergens in the air that we breathe. This may include dust, pollen and some animals.

In the same way that asthma causes inflammation and swelling in our airways, the inside lining of our nose, mouth and throat can also be sensitive to allergens.

? People with allergic rhinitis may experience one or more of the following symptoms. Do you have any?

- Itchy or watery eyes
- Itchy, runny or blocked nose
- Sneezing
- Needing to clear your throat frequently
- Snoring
- Breathing more through your mouth
- Feeling like you often have a cold

Some people may experience symptoms at certain times of the year while others may experience allergic rhinitis all year round.

There are a range of effective treatment options available to help manage your allergic rhinitis. Speak to your doctor or pharmacist about the best treatment options for you.

My allergic rhinitis are: _____

Influenza vaccination

Having asthma can increase your risk of developing complications from the influenza virus and cause your asthma to flare up. Respiratory Care WA recommends you discuss your flu vaccination with your doctor every year.

I have had my influenza vaccination this year

How to live well with asthma

Top tips for how to live well with asthma

- Be active! Physical activity is vital in keeping us healthy. Don't let asthma hold you back!
- Quit smoking / vaping - If you smoke or vape talk to your doctor about how to quit and help your lungs breathe better
- Eat well and maintain a healthy weight. Losing a small amount of weight if you need to may help to improve your asthma control
- Look after your mental health
- Keep your flu vaccinations up to date

For more information speak to Respiratory Care WA, your doctor or pharmacist.

Asthma Action Plans

An Asthma Action Plan is written by your doctor and lists your medications and when to use them.

It will help you:

- Recognise when your symptoms are getting worse
- Know when to take additional doses of your medication
- Know what to do in an asthma emergency

Both adults and children with asthma need an Asthma Action Plan. These need to be reviewed and updated annually or when your medication has been changed by a doctor.

My Asthma Action Plan

was written on _____

is due to be reviewed on _____

Asthma medications and devices

Asthma medications keep you well and maintain good asthma control

i **Relievers** - give quick relief from asthma symptoms by relaxing muscles around the airways. It is important that everyone with asthma has access to a reliever inhaler to use when they are experiencing asthma symptoms.

Some relievers are dual purpose, as they contain two types of medication - a quick acting reliever as well as an inhaled corticosteroid. Your doctor will work with you to find which reliever option is best suited for your needs.

i **Preventers** - reduced swelling and inflammation and make the airways less sensitive. Preventers need to be taken every day as prescribed to reduce symptoms and asthma flare-ups, even when you are feeling well. Most preventers are inhaled corticosteroids, and it may take a few weeks before they reach their full effect.

i **Combination preventers** - contain both a preventer to help prevent inflammation in your airways over the long-term and a long-acting reliever to ease ongoing symptoms.

i **Add-on treatments** - you may be prescribed extra treatments or therapies as well as your regular inhalers. These add-on treatments are usually prescribed for people with difficult to treat or severe asthma, as well as when you are having an asthma flare-up or attack.

My Asthma Medications

My reliever: _____

I carry it with me everywhere

My preventer: _____

I take it everyday as prescribed

I rinse my mouth after using my inhaled preventer

My add on treatment/therapy is: _____

Asthma medications and devices

There are many different types of devices that are used to deliver asthma medications. Knowing the correct technique will help ensure you get the most benefit from your medications. Have your device technique checked regularly by Respiratory Care WA, your doctor or pharmacist.

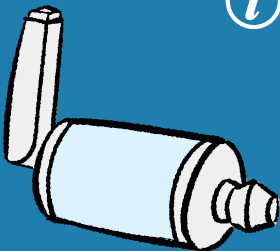
- My device technique was checked on: _____
- My device technique was checked on: _____
- By: _____ From: _____

Spacers - what you need to know

A spacer will help to get the right dose of medicine into your lungs when using a puffer and help to reduce side effects from medications. Adults and children should use a spacer. Depending on age and ability the spacer may need to be fitted with a mask.

Spacers should be washed once a month and after a respiratory infection.

Spacers are for single person use.



How to care for your spacer

1. Dismantle spacer
2. Wash in clean warm soapy water using kitchen detergent
3. Do not rinse or wipe dry. Allow to air dry (rinsing and wiping dry with a towel will create static)
4. Wipe mouthpiece clean of detergent before use

An asthma flare-up can happen to anyone with asthma at any time.

They can build slowly over time or quickly in a matter of minutes - some people call this an asthma attack. Asthma flare-ups can also develop more slowly (over hours to days or even weeks).

Asthma first aid can save someone's life - do no wait until asthma is severe to start first aid. Every second counts.

Begin asthma first aid if a person has asthma symptoms of:

- Breathlessness
- Wheezing
- Tight chest
- Persistent cough

Call an ambulance (dial 000) when symptoms become severe or life threatening.

Symptoms include:

- Difficulty breathing such as gasping for breath
- Pale/sweaty/blue lips
- May be confused or exhausted, distressed and panicky
- Inability to speak more than one or two words per breath
- Sucking in of skin over ribs/throat (tracheal tug) in children
- No or little response to reliever medication



Asthma First Aid

For Salbutamol (eg. Ventolin® or Asmol®)

1



Keep calm and sit up straight

2



Have 4 doses of reliever inhaler

Use a spacer if possible, one dose into the spacer at a time, taking four breaths after each dose.

3



Wait 4 minutes

If there is no improvement, have four more separate doses of reliever inhaler as above.

4



If no improvement

call an ambulance (dial 000)

Keep giving four separate doses every four minutes until ambulance arrives



Asthma First Aid

For Bricanyl® and Symbicort®

1 Keep calm and sit up straight



Have your reliever inhaler

Bricanyl Turbuhaler: Have 2 separate doses

Symbicort Turbuler: Have 2 separate doses

Symbicort Rapihaler: Have 2 separate doses

(Use a spacer if possible, 1 dose into a spacer at a time, taking 4 breaths after each dose)



3 If there is no improvement

Bricanyl Turbuhaler: Have 1 more dose

Symbicort Turbuhaler: Have 1 more dose

Symbicort Rapihaler: Have 2 more doses



If no improvement, call ambulance (dial 000)

4 While waiting for the ambulance:

Bricanyl Turbuhaler: Have 1 dose every 4 mins

Symbicort Turbuhaler: Have 1 dose every 4 mins (up to 6 max)

Symbicort Rapihaler: Have 2 doses every 4 mins (up to 8 max)



My Respiratory Diary

This diary can be used to keep a record of your asthma symptoms and triggers.

Date	# Doses of reliever	Reliever worked	Symptoms	Notes Eg. triggers, missed school or other
01/01/2024	4	Yes / No	Dry cough wheeze tight chest	Smokey day missed school

How we can help you

Respiratory Care WA, formerly Asthma WA, provides FREE individualised and group education and support for Western Australians with asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and their carers.

Our services include.



Personalised, tailored education and support

Appointments in person, via telehealth, or telephone



Helpline - 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)

Free call, available during business hours



Lung function testing

Bulk-billed service, with results sent to your healthcare provider



Children & Adult Respiratory Hubs

Lung function testing, education and consultation with a Respiratory Specialist



Group education

How to support people with asthma and/or COPD, including emergency management

**Call Respiratory Care WA on (08) 9289 3600
to speak to a member of our Respiratory Health
Team or to book a free consultation.**

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