



# Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health



08 9289 3600



36 Ord Street, West Perth, WA, 6005



[respiratorycarewa.org.au](http://respiratorycarewa.org.au)

## Tips For Healthy Minds - Exercise and Asthma

Physical activity is important in helping to manage asthma, but it can also be more challenging to participate in activity when you have asthma.

When we exercise our breathing changes and we can feel short of breath. For some kids this may cause them to worry as an asthma flare-up may be on the way. For others, they may feel down or frustrated that their asthma is stopping them from participating in sports.

### Exercise is great for everyone

There are a number of health benefits from exercise such as:

- raising your heart rate regularly to boost your lung power, increase stamina and reduce shortness of breath,
- helping you to maintain a healthy weight that also helps to reduce your risk of an asthma flare up,
- releasing 'feel-good' chemicals in your brain that leave you feeling happy and relaxed,
- supporting your immune system to help fight off colds and viruses, and
- improving your energy, alertness, mood, stress, relationships, confidence and clarity of mind.

### Tips for parents

Participating in physical activity can cause kids with asthma to feel stressed, worried or anxious. They may be embarrassed about having to take medications in front of others or concerned that they will be unable to keep up with their peers. Signs to look for that your child may be stressed or anxious include:

- **avoidance** – regularly avoiding events or physical activity/sport (especially if previously enjoyed) is an indication that you or your child may not be coping
- **withdrawal** – if you see your child not participating with their friends and withdrawing from social or other events, it is possible that something isn't right. It could be as subtle as not putting their hand up to participate, leaving to go to the bathroom (often), and coming up with excuses not to participate
- **negative comments** – if you hear your child expressing negative thoughts "I don't like", "I hate", "I am sad", "I don't want to". Whilst it's ok to express these feelings and you may encourage your child to do so, it is important to address these concerns



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## Tips For Healthy Minds - Exercise and Asthma

### Healthy minds for kids

Although exercise is recognised as a common trigger for asthma, it shouldn't be avoided. If your child is feeling anxious or stressed about participating in activities here are some tips to help manage their asthma and emotional wellbeing.

- Adopt an **"I can" attitude**.
- **Have another go**. Overcoming small hurdles allows us to develop the skills to overcome bigger ones when they come along.
- **Understand their asthma** by asking questions. The more knowledge you have about the condition, the more equipped you are to manage it effectively and participate in ALL aspects of life.
- **Self-care** – this includes doing things that help the child feel good about themselves, for instance leisure activities and hobbies. It could be as simple as drawing, taking a bath or reading. Self-care is time to restore and recover, mentally and physically.
- **Recognising** when they are stressed – this includes becoming aware of personal stress indicators which may include a combination of signs such as but not limited to a racing heart, negative thoughts, agitation, feeling tense or trouble sleeping.
- Learning **calming strategies** – mindfulness and visualisation techniques. These are readily available on the internet including YouTube! Smiling Mind is a good place to start [smilingmind.com.au](http://smilingmind.com.au)
- Don't exercise alone. Make sure their coach and teammates know about their asthma.
- Give them a copy of their asthma action plan and talk to them about what to do when they have symptoms.
- Start slowly and build up, staying within their comfort zone. Over time they will feel more confident and should be able to achieve more

### Need more help?

If you or your child are feeling stressed, worried or anxious or just aren't getting enough out of life it is important to seek help from a professional, such as your General Practitioner. They can speak with you and can refer to other support services that can assist with mental health. The Mental Health Care Plan initiative can provide up to 10 Medicare rebated sessions.

**For further information about asthma or to book an information session for your club contact Respiratory Care WA on 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)**

### For individuals living with Allergic Condition (and their families):

The **Allergy Support Hub** is a Perth-based charity providing frontline support services for individuals living with allergic condition, and their families. We offer free family support, seminars and low cost counselling services. You can find us on Facebook and Instagram and at [allergysupporthub.com.au](http://allergysupporthub.com.au) and for any enquiries email [info@allergysupporthub.com.au](mailto:info@allergysupporthub.com.au).