



Respiratory Care WA

Asthma | COPD | Respiratory Health



08 9289 3600



36 Ord Street, West Perth, WA, 6005



respiratorycarewa.org.au

Asthma and Exercise

Exercise should be a part of your day!

People with asthma cope better and have fewer flare-ups of asthma if they are fit. However, exercise may trigger asthma symptoms. This is called Exercise Induced Asthma (EIA). Exercise and activity are vital for keeping you fit and healthy. Being active is part of good asthma management. However, if exercise triggers your asthma, you should talk to your doctor about an exercise and medication program suitable for you.

Exercise will not cure asthma but is a vital part of asthma management.

What is EIA?

If you experience asthma symptoms during or after you exercise or play sport, you may have EIA. You may:

- Cough
- Feel tight in the chest
- Feel short of breath
- Wheeze

EIA can be managed so you can exercise and play sport.

What causes EIA?

At rest you breathe through your nose. As the air moves through the nose it is warmed and moistened. When you exercise you breathe faster through your mouth, inhaling more air. This means that you breathe colder, drier air. This makes the muscle around the airways tighten and your airways become narrow, making breathing more difficult. This results in asthma symptoms.

What must I do before exercising?

- Use your blue/grey reliever medication (Airomir, Asmol, Bricanyl, or Ventolin) 5 to 10 minutes before you warm up
- Some preventer medications (Intal, Intal Forte and Tilade) and some symptom controller medications (e.g. Oxis) may also be used to prevent EIA. Your doctor will tell you which medication is suitable for you
- **Always warm up** before any sport or exercise by doing 10 to 15 minutes of light exercises and stretching
- Always carry your blue/grey reliever medication in case you need it



What if I get EIA during sport or exercise?

- Stop exercising
- Treat Symptoms (First Aid) or follow written Asthma Action Plan
- Only return to activity if symptoms subside

If symptoms recur...

- Stop activity
- Treat symptoms (1st Aid) or follow written asthma action plan
- Do not return to any exercise for the rest of the day
- See your doctor for advice on asthma management



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





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What exercise can I do?

People with asthma should be able to participate in almost any sport or exercise. Scuba diving is the only sport that is not recommended for people with asthma.

How much should I exercise?

You can exercise or play sport as often as you wish. Ask your doctor for advice on Exercise Induced Asthma.

How can I help keep EIA under control?

- Make sure your asthma is under control;
- Have your asthma reviewed every 6 months by your doctor; and
- Have a personal written Asthma Action Plan which gives you step by step instructions on asthma management.

Want to be a high achiever?

- People with asthma can compete in sport to world class standards. There are many great athletes with asthma.
- Certain medications are banned if competing in local, state, national and international sport. The International Olympic Committee has banned all oral and injectable reliever medications. Some, but not all, inhaled medications are banned. Athletes using these drugs should check requirements with their National Sporting Organisation.
- For a detailed list of current information about asthma medications and their use in competitive sport, contact the Australian Sports Drug Agency on 1800 020 506.