



# Asthma and teenagers

**Asthma can affect any age group and this means it can affect teenagers as well. In fact, it affects about 1 in 10 teenagers in Australia.**

**Asthma affects everyone differently. Teenagers with asthma have sensitive airways that can react to different triggers, and their symptoms and needs may differ from others, even within the same family.**

**While treatment is similar to adults, the challenges often come from the changes of being a teenager.**

## Understanding teenagers

The teenage years involve big physical, emotional and social changes. Teenagers are learning to:

- Be independent
- Make their own decisions and
- Fit in with their friends.

They may test boundaries, take more risks and want more privacy. Managing asthma is just one more thing to juggle during this busy and sometimes stressful stage of life.

## Common challenges for teenagers with asthma

Some teenagers may:

- Ignore ongoing symptoms.
- Avoid using their inhaler in front of their friends.
- Cut back on activities instead of managing asthma.

- Overuse their reliever without improving control.
- Downplay how asthma affects them.
- Refuse to use a spacer

These behaviours are common and usually reflect a desire to fit in, feel “normal” or stay in control, not a lack of care.

## Hormonal changes

Puberty can affect asthma symptoms:

- Before puberty, boys may have more severe asthma symptoms.
- After puberty, asthma is more common and sometimes worse in girls.

Asthma can first appear during teenage years or later.



## Changes in asthma medication

From around 12–14 years of age, teenagers are usually treated like adults including:

- Adult doses of medicine
- Access to additional asthma treatments, such as dual-purpose relievers, maintenance and reliever therapy, and certain monoclonal antibodies

All teenagers with asthma should be on a preventer inhaler (a combination medication, inhaled corticosteroid + long-acting beta-agonist which is now recommended by the National Asthma Council).

Using a SABA (short-acting beta-agonist, e.g. Salbutamol/Ventolin®) alone is no longer recommended.

Tips for medication use:

- Continue using their spacer with their inhaler to ensure the correct dose reaches the lungs.
- Regular check-ups with a GP or healthcare professional are important, even when they feel

well. These visits help make sure asthma is under control and that treatment and the asthma action plan are still right for them.

## How parents and carers can support good asthma management

- Involve your teenager in their asthma management by encouraging them to directly speak with their doctor.
- Teach them the correct use of inhalers and spacers.
- Ensure preventers are taken daily, or as directed by their healthcare professional, and relievers are on hand at school, during sports and elsewhere.
- Share their Asthma Action Plan with teachers and carers.
- Make sure the family knows Asthma First Aid.
- Focus on the benefits of good asthma control such as having more energy and better participation in activities they enjoy.

- Praise effort not perfection, and listen to their concerns.
- Stay supportive. Mistakes happen.

## Helping your teenager thrive

The teenage years are a time of growing independence. With patience and support, most teenagers can manage their asthma well, stay active, and feel confident in their health.

### Sources:

1. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. *Asthma and Adolescents*. 2026.
2. Asthma.net. *The Connection Between Hormones and Asthma*. 2023
3. Asthma Australia. *Asthma in Teenagers, Tips for Parents and Young Adults*. 2025.
4. The Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne. *Asthma in Adolescents (12 Years and Over)*. 2026.
5. Better Health Victoria. *Asthma and teenagers*. 2025.
6. National Asthma Council. *Australian Asthma Handbook. Treatment levels for adults and adolescents*. 2026.

## How we can help

Respiratory Care WA has a team of respiratory healthcare professionals here to provide information and support for Western Australians living with asthma and COPD. We offer in-person education and support at our respiratory hubs or via telehealth. Our team can also visit schools, workplaces or community and sporting groups to deliver free asthma management sessions. Email [ask@respiratorycarewa.org.au](mailto:ask@respiratorycarewa.org.au) to find out more.

Note: From 17 years of age, teenagers will be referred to our Adult Respiratory Hub.