



## Managing asthma during winter

**Winter can be a challenging time for people with asthma.**

**Cold, dry air can tighten the airways, and spending more time indoors may increase exposure to triggers such as dust mites, pet dander, mould, smoke from fireplaces and viruses.**

**Colds and flu are also more common in winter and are a leading cause for asthma flare-ups.**

The good news is that with the right plan and a few simple steps, you can keep your asthma well controlled over winter.

### Get prepared before winter

Book an asthma review with your GP or nurse before winter starts.

This is a good opportunity to:

- Check your written Asthma Action Plan is up to date and that you know when to step up treatment or seek help
- Check your inhaler and spacer technique so your medicine works effectively
- Discuss your winter triggers and any recent symptoms
- Arrange your seasonal flu vaccination

### Asthma medications

Take your preventer medication every day, or as prescribed, even when you are feeling well. This helps prevent symptoms and reduces the chance of flare-ups.

Always carry your reliever with you. If you need your reliever more than twice a week (not including use before exercise), wake at night or notice breathlessness, wheezing or a worsening cough, see your doctor for a review.

### Manage winter triggers

Common winter triggers include cold air, sudden temperature changes, smoke from fireplaces and wood heaters, dust mites, mould, winter pollens and viruses.



You can reduce exposure by:

- Wearing a scarf over your mouth and nose in cold weather and breathing through your nose
- Avoiding smoke from indoor fireplaces and wood heaters
- Ensuring gas heaters and stoves are flued and serviced
- Use exhaust fans when cooking
- Keeping your home dry, well-ventilated and free of mould
- Washing bedding weekly in hot water and reducing dust where possible
- Checking air quality using a weather or air quality app and limiting outdoor activity when air quality is poor
- Taking care when moving between warm indoor spaces and cold outdoor air

Keeping a symptom diary can help you identify patterns and triggers.

Some people find saline nasal sprays or sinus rinses helpful. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if this is suitable for you.

### Protect yourself from colds and flu

Viral infections are a common cause of asthma flare-ups in winter. To reduce your risk:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water
- Avoid touching your face
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue
- Avoid sharing cups or cutlery
- Keep your distance from people who are unwell

The flu vaccine is recommended for everyone aged 6 months and over.

Many Australians are eligible for a free flu vaccine, including young children, pregnant women, people with certain medical conditions (including severe asthma), adults aged 65 and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

From mid-2026, a needle-free nasal spray flu vaccine will be available for children aged 2 to under 12 years, helping reduce needle anxiety.

### Stay active

Exercise is important for staying healthy, even in winter.

- Exercise when you're well
- Warm up before activity and cool down afterwards
- Consider indoor exercise on very cold or windy days.
- Follow your doctor's advice about using your reliever before exercise
- Monitor for symptoms during or after activity

With regular reviews, the right medications and a clear Asthma Action Plan, most people can stay active and healthy throughout winter.

#### Sources:

1. Asthma Australia. *Vaccinations*. 2025.

## 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.