

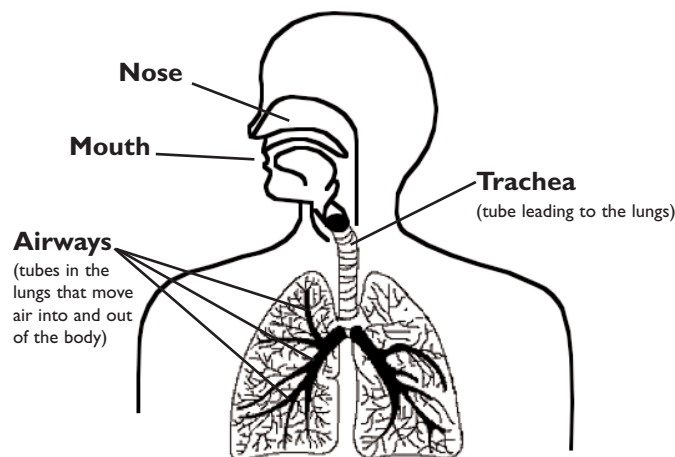
Basic Asthma Information

Asthma Keys

- Develop an Asthma Action Plan with your doctor. Go over it with your doctor or asthma specialist until you understand it. Follow the plan and update it often.
- Avoid things that make your asthma worse (asthma triggers)
- Know when and how to use your medications. Take them as directed.
- Check your peak flow daily, if your doctor tells you to.
- Have your quick relief medications with you at all times.
- Watch for early warning signs of an asthma attack.

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a lifelong, or chronic, breathing problem caused by swelling (inflammation) of the airways in the lungs. It cannot be cured, but symptoms can be prevented and controlled. When you have asthma, your airways are sensitive, or “twitchy.” They may react to many things. These things are called triggers. People who have asthma may wheeze or complain of feeling “tight” in the chest. They may also cough a



lot when their asthma is not under control.

Is Asthma a Serious Disease?

Asthma is a serious disease, and can kill if it is not treated the right way. When it is treated the right way, people with asthma can live normal, active lives.

What are the Symptoms of Asthma?

Not all people with asthma have the same symptoms, however, the most common symptoms are:

- Shortness of breath, chest “tightness”
- Wheezing
- Cough lasting more than a week, or that happens during the night or after exercise

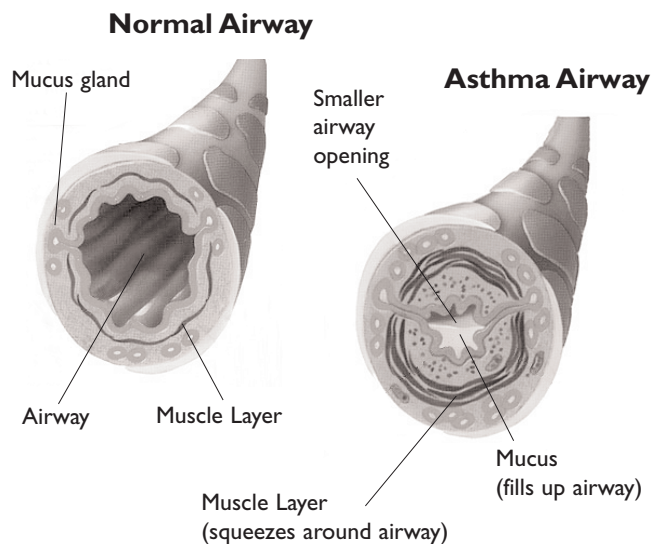
- Chronic cough (sometimes coughing is the only symptom you will have)
- When you have a cold, it lasts for more than 10 days, and goes into your chest

Who Gets Asthma?

Anyone can get asthma, at any age. Sometimes it starts in infancy, other times it starts later in childhood. Although some children seem to “outgrow” asthma, the disease never really goes away; there is just a time when you are not having any breathing problems. Asthma can also start at any time during adulthood, including the senior years. Some people start having asthma symptoms after a bad cold or flu. Other people develop asthma after a work-related exposure. If you suspect that you have asthma, see your doctor or health care provider.

What is an Asthma Attack?

An asthma “attack” or episode is a time when asthma symptoms flare up. The symptoms can be mild or severe. Anyone can have a severe attack, even a person with mild asthma. The attack can start suddenly or slowly. Sometimes a mild attack will seem to go away, but will come back a few hours later, and the second attack will be much worse than the first. Severe asthma symptoms need medical care right away.



During an asthma attack, the lining of the airways in the lungs swells and the mucus glands make more mucus. The muscles around the airways tighten and make the airways narrower. All of these changes in the lungs block the flow of air, making it hard to breathe. Knowing what is happening in the lungs during an asthma attack will help you to know why it often takes more than one medicine to treat the disease.