

Hope & Healing

Asthma Coping with Asthma

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

During an asthma attack the bronchial tubes that carry air into the lungs are in spasm, causing wheezing when you breathe. Asthma can occur at any age, but it is most common in children and young people.

There is no cure for asthma, so you must learn to cope with it. Fortunately, there are many ways to control and prevent asthma attacks, and if you follow them, you should have a comfortable life with minimal interference in your daily activities. If you have a child who has asthma, you must give very good care to prevent and treat the asthma attacks so that your child will have the best chance of outgrowing the asthma.

The Importance of Wheezing _____

During asthma the inside of the bronchial tubes swell and produce excess mucus that narrows the passageways for air. As air is drawn into and pushed out of the lungs during breathing, the narrowed passageways make a wheezing or whistling sound. Wheezing is always an important sound because it indicates difficult breathing. Wheezing requires your doctor's help to decide the cause, to plan the treatment, and to begin preventive measures. This is particularly true for the first few attacks, until your doctor understands what's going on.

Asthma Triggers _____

Asthma is more common in families where other family members have asthma, hay fever, or allergic skin

rashes. Asthma is "triggered" by an exposure to one or a combination of things. These triggering substances or events can be grouped into three large categories:

1. Allergy-producing substances (Allergens).
2. Respiratory Infections.
3. Emotional Stress.

Allergic Asthma _____

This type of asthma is most common in children. There are two types of substances that cause allergic asthma: seasonal allergens and perennial allergens.

Seasonal allergens shift with the seasons. If a child has asthma only in the spring and summer, the trouble maker will probably be grass, tree, or weed pollens that are in the area. In the fall months it may be ragweed or the mold that comes from fallen leaves. When allergic asthma doesn't follow a seasonal pattern, it is usually caused by house dust, carpet mites, animal dander (material shed from the coats of animals), drugs, or foods. These are present all the time and are thereby called perennial.

Asthma Caused by Respiratory Infections _____

Bronchitis, pneumonia, and flu infections can cause asthma. Asthma caused by infections is more common in older adults but is sometimes seen in children. It is more common during the winter months when the greatest number of respiratory infections occurs.

Asthma Caused by Emotional Stress _____

In children the start of a new school term, the birth of a brother or sister, a separation from parents, or other emotional upsets can trigger asthma attacks. In adults, a wide variety of family or job-related problems may be the cause of attacks.

Other Asthma Triggers _____

There are other asthma triggers. They are listed here for easy reference:

- Vigorous exercise, especially in cold weather.
- Occupational dusts and odors: plastics, grains, metals, wood.
- Air pollution: cigarette smoke, ozone, sulfur dioxide, auto exhaust.
- Household products: paints, cleaners, sprays, perfumes.
- Drugs: aspirin, certain heart and arthritis medications.
- Foods: foods containing sulfites, nuts, wheat, and food dyes.
- Physical Conditions: pregnancy, overactive thyroid, esophageal disorders.
- Weather Conditions: rapid changes in temperature or humidity.

Asthma Medicines and Treatment

The treatment of asthma varies according to the severity of the problem. Some people have only one or two episodes of asthma and are never bothered again — perhaps we shouldn't even call these asthma attacks. Others will have asthma almost daily and they are severely limited in their lives.

Asthma treatments often provide relief of symptoms, sometimes dramatically so, but efforts must also be made to remove the cause, whether it is allergic, infectious, or emotional.

Many asthma drugs are in inhalers that deliver the same dose each time through a mouthpiece that allows you to pull air and the medicine into your lungs at the same time. If you have one of these, be certain that you know how to use it correctly. Many people don't get full benefit because they use them incorrectly. These are the basic asthma medicines:

Cortisone-like medicines: These are used to prevent asthma at the beginning of an attack to get it under control.

Bronchodilators: These may be in pill, liquid or spray forms. They relax the bronchial airways. Sometimes during a severe attack they are given by injection.

Cromolyn: This medication is taken by spray or inhaler and is used daily to prevent attacks. It is not useful at all in the treatment of attacks.

Allergy Shots: These are used to decrease the sensitiveness of the bronchial airways to the allergic substance.

Allergen Blockers: Singular

Asthma Proofing Your Home _____

A relatively clean and dust-free house is healthy for all people, but essential for the allergic person. Rugs, furniture, drapes, and bedspreads and other items that are dust catchers should be cleaned regularly, especially those in

a child's bedroom, since a child spends about one-half his or her life in the bedroom. In the bedroom, consider these recommendations:

- Use smooth, not fuzzy, washable blankets or bedspreads.
- Use light, washable cotton or synthetic curtains, not drapes.
- Use washable cotton throw rugs, not wall-to-wall carpeting.
- Eliminate stuffed-animal toys.
- Clean the room daily by damp dusting and damp mopping.

When to Call the Doctor _____

Your doctor should be notified if:

- A fever is present.
- Coughing can't be stopped.
- There is chest pain.
- The attack is severe.
- The pulse rate is 120 beats a minute or greater.
- The rate of breathing is 30 per minute or more.
- You can hardly talk because of shortness of breath.

If in doubt, let the doctor know. If severe, and unresponsive to inhalent medicines, head for the emergency room.

Summary _____

Severe asthma strains the entire family. Prevention is the best move. Make an effort to understand asthma so that you will know the basic reasons for your doctor's plan of treatment. In turn, this knowledge will make you better able to follow your doctor's instructions and to live comfortably and productively with asthma.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Creative Brooding

Sometimes our problems loom large and deny our efforts at solutions and disturb our peace of mind. Here's what may be at the root of our difficulty.

We're focused on symptoms. We're leaving our minds, the real cause of the trouble, untouched.

Sometimes we wrestle:

- with circumstances
- with people
- with things

Our struggle leaves our minds unchanged. We are never able to transform ourselves by renewing our circumstances. We must renew our minds.

To obtain better health, a good home, abundant prosperity, friends, beauty, joy, and an exciting life, we must go to the trouble to think about them creatively, to brood about them you might say, since thought is the only first step.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.