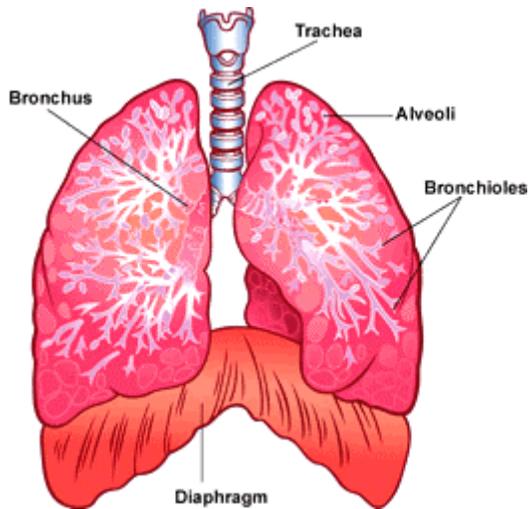


What is Asthma?



What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways of your lungs and your breathing. Your airways, or breathing tubes, are called bronchial (bron'-kee-ul) tubes. When there is an asthma flare-up or attack, the bronchials become inflamed and narrowed. There may also be mucus present along with the inflammation. These different changes make it difficult for air to pass through the bronchial tubes and into the lungs, creating problems with breathing.

In between flare-ups, breathing may seem normal. If you become ill, it may take several days to return to this normal baseline. Prevention of flare-ups is crucial. In addition, if symptoms do occur, early detection and treatment is needed to maximize health.

What are the symptoms associated with an asthma flare-up?

- Wheezing or whistling sound when breathing
- Coughing
- Feeling of chest tightness
- Difficulty breathing and/or short of breath

What causes asthma flare-ups?

Examples may include:

- Tobacco smoke
- Microscopic bugs called dust mites that live on particles of dust
- Animal dander
- Mold
- Exercise
- Dust
- Chalk
- Perfumes
- Pollen and grasses
- Viruses
- Breathing in cold air

How is asthma treated?

Asthma is treated with different medications depending upon the individual needs of each patient. These options can be in the form of inhalers, pills and liquid medications. Treatment will often depend upon how serious, how often, and how fast the flare-ups occur. Chronic asthma is treated with medications that reduce inflammation of the bronchial tubes. During an acute flare-up, bronchodilators are usually used to relax the muscles of the bronchial tubes and to allow air to pass more freely in and out of your airways.

Can flare-ups be prevented?

Many asthma flare-ups can be prevented by following your individual asthma management plan prescribed by your physician:

- **Identify and control the asthma triggers to which you are sensitive.**

- *Avoid triggers through environmental controls such as:*

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| ✓ Frequent vacuuming | ✓ Changing air filters |
| ✓ Frequent dusting | ✓ Avoiding tobacco smoke in the home and car |
| ✓ Keeping pets out of bedrooms | |
| ✓ Cleaning bed linens and pillows | |

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Changes in breathing | well or of feeling "funny." |
| ✓ Changes in mood or energy level | |

- *Call your physician when warning signs are present. Your (or your child's) asthma medications and management plan may need to be adjusted.*
- *Your physician may recommend use of a peak flow meter, which is a portable device that you blow into like a balloon, to measure how well your lungs are working.*

Source:

Nemours Foundation @ <http://kidshealth.org>

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- **Take medications as prescribed.**

- *Flare-ups commonly occur when the maintenance medication plan is not consistently followed.*

- **Watch for early warning signs of an asthma flare-up.**

- *Signs may occur a couple of hours to a couple of days prior to a flare-up:*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✓ Sneezing, wheezing, coughing | ✓ General complaints of not feeling |
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