



Asthma

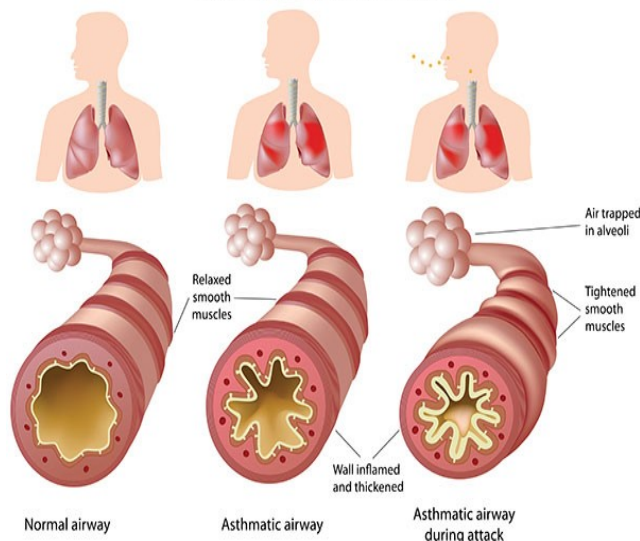
What is Asthma?

Asthma is a long-term disease that causes obstruction of the airways of the lungs, due to narrowing, swelling, and mucus production. Asthma causes wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. It often begins in childhood, although people of all ages can develop asthma; in some cases it disappears for a time. People with a family history of allergies are more likely to develop asthma and many people with asthma also have allergies. In most cases, the cause of asthma is unknown and there is no cure. It is a chronic condition that must be managed throughout one's life.(1, 2)

What is an Asthma Attack?

An asthma attack is when the airways that bring air into the lungs tighten, reducing the amount of air that can pass through the lungs. The sides of the airways in the lungs swell, and the airways shrink. Asthma attacks may be characterized by coughing, chest tightness, wheezing, and trouble breathing. An asthma attack can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few days and is frequently brought on by asthma "triggers." However, people with asthma experience a wide range of triggers and one person's triggers may be very different from another's.

Asthma and Your Airways



What Causes an Asthma Attack?

Common asthma triggers include:

- Exposure to allergens, such as
 - Dust & dust mites
 - Mold
 - Pollen
 - Pet hair and/or dander
 - Pests (cockroaches & mice)
 - Some food & food additives
 - Environmental pollution, including
 - Tobacco smoke
 - Smoke from burning wood or grass
 - Air pollution
 - Chemicals in air or food
 - Exercise
 - Respiratory infections (i.e. common cold)
 - Stress and strong emotions
 - Cleaning agents or other causes of strong odors
 - Poor weather conditions (high humidity, thunderstorms)
 - Some fragrances
- Since everyone's triggers are different, it is very important to learn your triggers and do your best to avoid them.

Asthma Prevalence & Trends

- About 8.3% of adults in the United States currently have asthma. ⁽¹⁾
- About 8.3% of children in the United States currently have asthma. ⁽¹⁾ The majority of children who develop asthma do so before age 5. ⁽²⁾
- Asthma rates continue to increase. Since 1980, the percentage of the US population with asthma has increased from about 3% to about 8%. ⁽¹⁾
- Those who fall below 100% of the federal poverty line are more likely to be diagnosed with asthma (~10.9%)
- About 21% of people with asthma are smokers, even though cigarette smoke is a known trigger for asthma attacks.
- About 39% of people with asthma are obese, which is significantly higher than the obesity rate for people without asthma.

Diagnosis & Treatment

There is no cure for asthma, but many people are able to manage their symptoms and achieve a high quality of life. See your doctor for regular check-ups or if you are experiencing symptoms of asthma: wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, or chest tightness. A doctor can check your lung function and test for allergies which will help determine if you have asthma. Pay attention to when symptoms occur: time of day, season, after exercise, after laughing or crying, or when exposed to common asthma triggers such as smoke, dust, pollen, or mold. If you are diagnosed with asthma, your doctor may prescribe medications to help you control your symptoms. There are two types of asthma medications: quick-relief and long-term control. Quick-relief medicines control the symptoms of an asthma attack and long-term control medications will help reduce the number and severity of attacks. Remember, not everyone with asthma takes the same medication and it is very important to take the medication prescribed by your doctor. ^(1,2)

Asthma in Iowa

- 10.3% of adult Iowans report that they have asthma. This is an increase of 1.8% since 2000. ⁽³⁾
- 6.7% report that their child had ever been told they had asthma by a doctor. This is a decrease of 3.1% since 2005. ⁽³⁾⁽³⁾
- Studies have shown that there is a high asthma prevalence among children living on farms that raise swine and/or add antibiotics to feed. ⁽³⁾

References

1. Asthma. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website. https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/most_recent_data.htm. Accessed July 5, 2018.
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3. Asthma in Iowa: A Plan to Improve the Health of Iowans with Asthma 2010-2015. Iowa Department of Public Health. http://action.lung.org/site/DocServer/stateplan_iowa.pdf?docID=29986. Published May 2010. Accessed July 29, 2015.