

ASTHMA

What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects your lungs. It is the most common disease of children. It is also common in adults. Asthma causes repeated attacks of wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. It is sometimes called reactive airways disease (RAD).

In most cases we don't know what causes asthma. There is no cure. You can control your asthma by knowing the warning signs of an attack. Your doctor will give you advice on how you can avoid getting an attack. By controlling your asthma you will not have the wheezing and coughing or have to visit the hospital. You can sleep better and not have to miss work or school. You will also be able to take part in all physical activities.

What Is An Asthma Attack?

Small tubes called Airways carry the air you breathe to your lungs. As the air moves through the lungs, the tubes become smaller like branches of a tree. When you have an attack, the sides of the tubes in your lungs become inflamed and swollen. Muscles around the tubes get tight and less air passes in and out of the lungs. Mucus forms in the tubes. This causes the tubes to clog. This is what causes an asthma attack. If you have symptoms such as shortness of breath, you should go to the Emergency Room right away.

What Causes An Asthma Attack?

House dust mites, air pollution, pollen, pets, and wood or tobacco smoke can cause an asthma attack. A common cold can cause an attack. Other things that can cause an attack are cold weather, foods or food additives, and some drug allergies. Some people have a type of asthma that is triggered by exercise.

How Is Asthma Treated?

You can treat your asthma by taking your medicine. You can also control it by avoiding the things that can cause an attack. It is very important that you avoid the things that are around you that make your asthma worse.

You and your health care provider can make a plan to control your asthma. This plan is called an "Asthma Action Plan." The medicines for asthma are different for each person. The medicine can be inhaled or taken as a pill. The medicine can be for quick-relief or long-term control. Quick-relief medicines control the symptoms of an asthma attack. If you are using your quick-relief medicines more frequently, you should visit your health-care provider to evaluate your asthma management plan. Long-term control medicines make you have fewer and milder attacks. The long-term medicines are not meant to help you when you are having an attack.

Take Control of Your Asthma

The important thing to remember is that **you** can control your asthma. You and your health care provider can make an asthma management plan that will work for you. Remember to take your long-term control medicine even when you don't have symptoms.