

What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition that causes narrowing of the breathing tubes in your lungs. These tubes move air in and out of the lungs. Asthma usually happens now and then or in “attacks.” During attacks the breathing tubes narrow and less air moves in and out of the lungs. The narrowed breathing tubes cause wheezing and shortness of breath.

Narrowing of the breathing tubes is caused by inflammation or irritation of the breathing tubes. Asthma triggers are things that start asthma attacks. Different things trigger asthma in different people.

Some triggers are:

Cigarette smoke	Running	Dust	Cold or humid air
Air pollution	Cockroaches	Mold	Strong smells or sprays
Pollen (from trees, flowers, and grass)			Infections (like colds or sinus infections)
Animal dander (from the skin, hair, or feathers of animals)			Dust mites (in house dust)

What are the symptoms of asthma?

Coughing	Wheezing	Trouble breathing at night
Shortness of breath	Chest tightness	

How is asthma treated?

First, you should avoid asthma triggers. There are two types of medicines used to treat asthma. They are quick relievers and controllers.

Quick relievers are medicines that work to relax the muscles around the breathing tubes. This helps open the breathing tubes and quickly improves asthma symptoms like wheezing or shortness of breath. These medicines usually work quickly. They only last a short time (about 4 to 6 hours). Quick relievers should be used right away to stop an asthma attack. Most people with asthma keep this inhaler with them at all times. Examples of these medicines are Albuterol, Proventil®, and Ventolin®.

Controllers are very important for controlling persistent asthma. They reduce inflammation of the breathing tubes. They improve asthma symptoms that persist more than a few days. They also prevent asthma attacks. These medicines need to be taken every day. Some controllers can take a few days to few weeks to work. They are not for quick relief of asthma symptoms. If you stop taking your controller, your asthma may get worse. Examples of these medicines are on your Asthma Action Plan. Your doctor will write the medicines that you should use.

REMEMBER TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT EVERY YEAR