



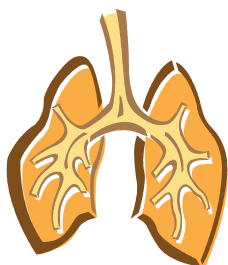
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
PEDIATRIC PULMONARY CENTER

The Asthma



Booklet

The University of Arizona
Pediatric Pulmonary Center
www.uappc.peds.arizona.edu



Everyone's lungs have tunnels in them that let oxygen pass through. These tunnels are called bronchial tubes. The bronchial tubes have a pink lining that covers the inside of the tube. Oxygen passes through the bronchial tubes and enters your blood.

Why is Oxygen important?

- * It keeps your heart pumping
- * It helps information go from your head to the rest of your body
- * Keeps your immune system strong so you stay healthier
- * It gets rid of things that are not good for your body
- * It helps you digest your food
- * It also does a lot of other cool things

As you can see Oxygen is very important to your body.



What happens if your body does not get enough oxygen?

- * It is more likely that you will get sick
- * Your body becomes tired
- * It is harder for you to concentrate and remember
- * Plus many, many other things

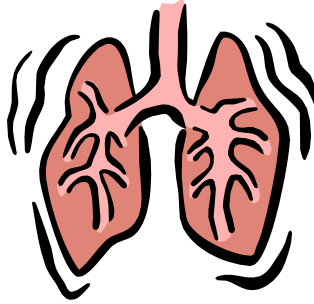


So what is Asthma and how does it affect your body's oxygen?

Do you remember, in the beginning, when we mentioned the pink lining of the bronchial tubes?

When someone has asthma the bronchial tubes become bothered or irritated by different things and

swell up. The things that cause the lining to swell are called triggers. Once the tubes swell, it makes less room for oxygen to move in and out of the lungs. When the tubes swell up they also become covered with mucus which makes the airway even smaller.



What are some common triggers?

- * Dust
- * Some foods
- * Animals
- * Cigarette smoke
- * Some perfumes or aerosol sprays
- * Cold or dry air
- * Exercise
- * Laughing or yelling for long periods
- * Colds or the flu



Winter



Every person is different, so some of these triggers may affect one person without affecting another. It is important to understand your own body and pay attention to the things in your life that make it harder for you to breathe. When your lungs are irritated by these triggers, it is called an asthma attack or an asthma episode.

What symptoms can happen to a person with asthma when they have an attack?

- * The chest might feel tighter than normal (some say it feels like someone is sitting on their chest)
- * The person might cough a lot
- * A wheezing or whistling sound may be heard when the person breathes
- * It becomes more difficult to breathe

Just because a person has asthma does not mean he or she will have all these symptoms. It also does not mean they will experience them to the same degree as everyone else. A person with asthma may cough more or less than another friend with asthma. The person might have a wheeze that is easy for everyone to hear, or he or she might have no whistling sounds at all.

How do you get asthma?

No one knows for sure how people get asthma. Doctors do believe that people get asthma from two ways: genetics (from their parents) and the environment.



Is asthma contagious? Can I catch it from a friend or family member who has asthma?

No! You can NOT get asthma by playing or spending time with others who have asthma.



If I have asthma does it mean I cannot play sports or have pets?

No! It is really good for people with or without asthma to play sports or run around with their friends. It is just as important to take things slowly at first and use any and all medications the doctor may give you.



As for pets, if being around your pet is making it harder to breathe, then sometimes changing your pet's food can help. If you do not already have a pet, you may want to get a pet that does not shed its hair. There are a lot of different things that can be done so it is best to talk to your doctor and a veterinarian.

Can you cure asthma?

No. Unfortunately there is no cure for asthma, but there are a lot of ways the doctors can help you take care of it so it does not bother you very often.

What can you do to make your asthma better or to make your asthma attacks happen less often?

- * Stay away from as many of your triggers as possible
- * Never ever smoke
- * Use the medicines your doctor gives you and use them when he or she says to
- * Try to get regular exercise



What are some things your doctor may give you to stop your asthma attacks?

- * Rescue medications (sometimes they are called a fast-acting medication)
- * Controller medications (sometimes these are called preventive medications)

What is a rescue medication?

A rescue medication works fast to stop the symptoms of an asthma attack after it has started. These medicines do a really good job to stop the coughing and wheezing, but the medicine does not keep working for long.



What is a controller medication?

Controller medications help prevent the symptoms from happening. These medications keep the lining of the bronchial tubes from swelling up. Unlike rescue medications, the controller medications take a lot longer to work, but it works for a lot longer. Some of the controller medications can take days or weeks to start working. It is so slow that you might not notice that it is working.

Since both types of medications work differently, it is important to use your medications exactly as your doctor tells you.

Asthma may seem like a lot of work, but once you understand more about it and how to take care of yourself, it should not take you long at all. In fact, once you start your treatments you will have more energy to do the things you really want to do like riding your bike, swimming, running, or what ever you love to do.





**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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Developed by PPC Trainee

The University of Arizona
Pediatric Pulmonary Center
1501 N. Campbell Ave.
Tucson Arizona 85724 - 5073
www.uappc.peds.arizona.edu
Phone: 520-626-2962
Fax: 520-626-5942