

Being active with asthma

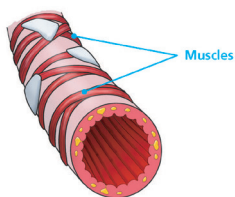
Activity is an important part of life and people with asthma can expect to live a full and active life. Asthma should not stop or restrict any of your daily activities. If you have asthma, regular physical exercise can improve your general health and wellbeing.

What is asthma?

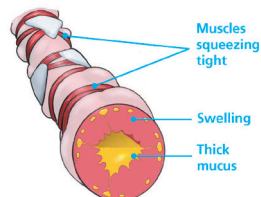
People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs. When exposed to certain triggers their airways narrow, making it hard for them to breathe. Three main factors cause the airways to become narrow:

- The inside lining of the airways becomes red and swollen (inflammation)
- Extra mucus (sticky fluid) may be produced
- The muscle around the airways tightens (bronchoconstriction)

Normal Airway



Asthma Airway



Symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, wheeze, chest tightness and a dry, irritating, persistent cough, particularly at night or early in the morning, with exercise or activity.

Is asthma stopping or restricting your daily activities?

You can learn how to manage your asthma in order to have a healthy active lifestyle. Asthma should not stop you from doing any of your day to day activities, such as:

- Bike riding
- Climbing stairs
- Dancing
- Gardening
- General household chores
- Gym activities
- Organised team sports
- Playing with children
- Walking

Managing your asthma effectively

- Have regular reviews of your asthma and ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan
- Know your asthma symptoms and how to treat them
- Make sure you know how to use your asthma medications correctly
- Recognise signs of worsening asthma and follow your written Asthma Action Plan
- Know your Asthma First Aid Plan and how to use it
- Inform others about your asthma and how they can provide Asthma First Aid
- Discuss with your doctor whether your medication doses are appropriate and if you have been well controlled for some time, whether the dose you are on could be reduced

What is an Asthma Action Plan?

An Asthma Action Plan is a written set of instructions prepared in partnership with your doctor that helps you to manage your asthma at different times. Your plan will help you to:

- Recognise worsening asthma symptoms
- Start treatment quickly
- Seek the right medical assistance

Early attention to worsening asthma may prevent you from having a serious attack. Ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan.

Asthma symptoms during activity

Exercise and activity are vital for keeping you fit and healthy and are a part of good asthma management. If you develop asthma symptoms during or after activity it may be a sign of poorly controlled asthma or Exercise-Induced Asthma (EIA). You should see your doctor for a review to check that your asthma is under control.

What is Exercise Induced Asthma (EIA)?

Shortness of breath during or after physical activity is common. However, if physical exertion causes you to feel short of breath, wheeze, feel tight in the chest or cough, and these symptoms do not improve with rest within minutes, you may have EIA. See your doctor for further advice.

What causes EIA?

At rest you breathe through your nose. As the air moves through the nose it is warmed and moistened. When you exercise you breathe faster through your

mouth, inhaling colder, drier air. This may cause the muscles around the airways to tighten, making breathing more difficult.

How can I prepare before exercise or activity?

- Your doctor may advise you to use your blue reliever medication (Airomir, APO, Asmol, *Bricanyl or Ventolin) 5-10 minutes before you begin exercising.
 - Some preventer medications and some symptom controller medications may be used to help prevent EIA. Your doctor will advise you on the most suitable medication.
 - Always warm up before exercise or activity
 - Always carry your reliever medication in case you need it
 - Avoid exercise where there are high levels of pollen or air pollution or on very cold days
 - If you have a higher level of fitness you are less likely to have the symptoms of EIA
- *Bricanyl is only available in a dry powder inhaler and cannot be used via a spacer.

What if I get EIA during exercise or activity?

- Stop the exercise or activity
- Take 4 separate puffs of a blue reliever. The medication is best taken one puff at a time via a spacer device. Take 4 breaths from the spacer after each puff of medication. If a spacer is not available, use the blue reliever puffer on its own
- Wait 4 minutes
- Only return to exercise or activity if you can breathe easily and are free of asthma symptoms

If symptoms do not go away or they return when you recommence activity:

- Use your blue reliever as before
- Do not return to any exercise or activity for the rest of the day
- See your doctor for advice on asthma management
- If symptoms persist, follow the Asthma First Aid Plan

What exercise or activity can I do?

People with asthma should be able to participate in almost any sport or exercise. SCUBA diving is the only sport that you may be excluded from due to medical restrictions.

How often should I be active?

You can exercise or be active as often as you wish. However if you are experiencing asthma symptoms you should consult your doctor for further advice.

Want to be a high achiever?


- People with asthma can compete in sport to world class standards
- Certain asthma medications are banned if competing in local, state, national and international sport. Athletes using medications for their asthma should check with their state or national sporting organisation
- For detailed information about asthma medications and their use in competitive sport contact the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority on 1800 020 506 or www.asada.gov.au

For further information on EIA contact:


- Your doctor
- Your local Asthma Foundation on 1800 278 462

Asthma First Aid


1 Sit the person upright
 — Be calm and reassuring
 — Do not leave them alone



2 Give 4 puffs of blue reliever puffer medication
 — Use a spacer if there is one
 — **Shake** puffer
 — Put **1 puff** into spacer
 — Take **4 breaths** from spacer
Repeat until 4 puffs have been taken
Remember: Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths




3 Wait 4 minutes
 — If there is no improvement, give **4 more puffs** as above




4 If there is still no improvement call emergency assistance (DIAL 000)*
 — Say 'ambulance' and that someone is having an asthma attack
 — Keep giving **4 puffs** every **4 minutes** until emergency assistance arrives

*If calling Triple Zero (000) does not work on your mobile phone, try 112




Call emergency assistance immediately (DIAL 000)
 — If the person is not breathing
 — If the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse, or is not improving
 — If the person is having an asthma attack and a puffer is not available
 — If you are not sure if it's asthma
Blue reliever medication is unlikely to harm, even if the person does not have asthma



To find out more contact your local Asthma Foundation
1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462) | asthmaaustralia.org.au

© Asthma Australia 2013 Supported by the Australian Government



DISCLAIMER:
 Information in this brochure is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.
 Adapted from: Being Active with Asthma Asthma Foundations Australia.
 April 2010