

Asthma



Embracing Health

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lungs that can be mild or severe. Symptoms may include: a bad cough, wheezing, trouble breathing, or even a feeling of tightness in your chest. There is no cure for asthma, but it can usually be controlled. During an asthma attack, the bronchial tubes react to a trigger (like dust, animal dander, pollen, etc.) which makes them inflamed and swollen, and creates more mucus than usual. The muscles around the airways begin to tighten or constrict. This tightening and swelling creates the symptoms of asthma, making it hard to breathe.

Start a Dialogue

My 411! Ask yourself, how can I tell if I have asthma?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. I've noticed that I wheeze sometimes and feel tightness in my chest. Should I be tested for asthma?

Embracing Women

Adult women are more likely than men to have asthma, be hospitalized as a result, or to die from an attack. Asthma may be linked to the hormonal changes in a woman's body. Many women tend to have asthma attacks just before or during their period. Women who are being treated for asthma with steroidal medications need to keep a close eye on the health of their bones, since these medicines can have a

negative impact on their bone density. If not monitored, this can cause Osteoporosis, which is a disease where bones become fragile and are more likely to break.

Asthma may get better, get worse, or remain the same during a pregnancy. Most women with asthma have a safe and normal pregnancy. During a pregnancy it is very important to follow your doctor's advised treatment plan.

Consider Gender Differences

My 411! Ask yourself: How can I improve my asthma symptoms without jeopardizing my health in other ways?

Talk 2 Me! Tell your doctor. If I take steroidal medications, how can I protect my bone health and prevent Osteoporosis? What medications are safe for me to take if I am pregnant?

Embracing Lifestyles

Although the triggers vary, some commonly recognized causes are: animal dander, dust mites, pollen from trees and grass, mold (indoor and outdoor), cigarette smoke, air pollution, infections like colds and flu, exercise, emotions, stress, weather changes, cold air, paint fumes, strong cooking odors, perfumes and other scented products, plus some foods and medicines.

Get a Handle

My 411! Ask yourself, have I noticed specific things that seem to trigger an attack?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. I've heard there are asthma triggers. How can I find what may be triggering my attacks?

Embracing Common Sense!

Wash your pet(s) once a week, don't smoke, don't allow smoking in your home or around you, stay indoors with the air conditioner on when the pollen count is high, keep bedding and clothes clean, wash your hands often, get a flu shot, use a scarf to protect your nose and mouth in the winter, pay attention to what triggers your attacks and avoid them, and follow your asthma treatment plan!

Create Healthier Habits

My 411! Ask yourself, what can I do around the house that will help me avoid asthma triggers?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Could there be something in my home making my asthma worse? Could my personal habits be making it worse? Tell me what I can change.

Embracing Science

Make an appointment with your doctor. This is your moment in the spotlight, so don't waste it! Talk candidly about your symptoms, health background, and concerns. Be sure to discuss

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any known allergies, or problems with over-the-counter or prescriptions drugs during your visit.

It's Time for Show and Tell

My 411! Ask yourself, can my family doctor help me, or should I see a specialist?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Do you routinely treat asthma patients? If not, can you suggest someone who specializes?

Possible tests for asthma

Your doctor may order tests for you. These could include: a pulmonary function test to measure how well your lungs take in and exhale air and how efficiently they transfer oxygen to the blood; a peak flow meter measuring air flowing out of your lungs as you forcefully blow into a device; allergy testing, arterial blood gas, or other blood tests.

Make Smart Choices

My 411! Ask yourself, what is the best way for me to get control of this problem? What tests am I willing to have? What will my insurance cover?

Talk 2 Me! Talk to your doctor. Would a peak flow meter help me to monitor my asthma to see if it's getting worse?

Possible treatments for asthma

★ The two types of medicines most often used for asthma include a fast-acting, inhaled bronchodilator (which helps to open up airways), and anti-inflammatory medicines like corticosteroids, which are used daily to help reduce the swelling of airways. These may be administered by spray (an inhaler) or by pills.

My 411! Ask yourself, do I feel comfortable with the tests and information I've been given? Do I understand my diagnosis? What more should I know?

Talk 2 Me! Can you show me how to use my inhaler correctly? Can I use long-term control medications to help control my asthma? Is it safe for me to use short-acting asthma medicines for quick relief during an attack? What do I do if my asthma doesn't get better?

Embracing Strength

Finding ways to treat your asthma by paying attention to your mind and spirit, as well as your body, are approaches that may provide you with relief. Creating time every day to find balance is very important to your health.

Meditation, yoga, tai chi, qui gong, or other modalities for staying in the moment help to calm the mind, and focus on the breath—which is time well spent.

Keeping a diary that tracks everything from your asthma attacks, to the possible triggers, to what helps keep an attack from happening will provide you with valuable insights into your health. Taking medications as prescribed and paying attention to their effectiveness is also important.

Make it a goal to learn more about ways you can prevent attacks, create a healthier environment inside and out, make your body stronger, and live as normal a day-to-day life as possible.

Simple Steps

My 411! Ask yourself, what can I do to make myself stronger, and more fit, that not only gives me a better day – but keeps my asthma away?

★ **Talk 2 Me!** Talk to your doctor. What forms of exercise do you feel would be good for me? Do you have any ideas for my diet? I want to live a long and healthy life, what steps do you feel I should take to make sure that becomes a reality?

