

Asthma: Brief Version

KEY POINTS

- Asthma is a lung disease that can cause coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath.
 - Asthma is treated with several kinds of medicines.
 - Work with your provider on an asthma action plan. This plan helps you know what to do when you have problems.
 - Talk to your provider about ways you can keep your home free of things that could trigger asthma.
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What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease. It can cause wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath. You can get asthma at any age, but it is more common in children.

When this coughing and wheezing happens, it is called an asthma attack. An asthma attack may:

- Last a few minutes or several days
- Be mild or severe
- Cause death if it is severe and not treated in time

It is very important to get treatment for asthma so you can live a healthy, active life.

What is the cause?

If you have asthma, the airways in your lungs tighten up. The airways also swell and have more mucus than you need. This means that there is less room for air to move in and out.

What are the symptoms?

You may:

- Feel tightness in the chest
- Feel short of breath
- Cough or wheeze

You may have symptoms when you:

- Exercise or other physical activity
- Sleep or at night
- Breathe in something you are allergic to such as dust, pollen, mold, or animal dander
- Breathe in something that irritates your lungs such as cold air, viruses, and tobacco smoke

- Take aspirin or another NSAID

How is it treated?

With asthma treatment, you should be able to live a normal, active life. You will probably need to:

- Take medicine
- Stay away from things that make it hard for you to breathe

There are 2 main kinds of medicines for asthma.

- Quick-relief medicines help open your airways so more air can move in and out. Quick-relief medicines are used to treat asthma attacks. They may be called rescue medicines because they act fast. You should always have a quick-relief medicine with you in case you start to cough or wheeze.
- Controller medicines help keep the airways from swelling. You take these medicines every day to prevent asthma attacks, even if you do not have symptoms. These drugs do not help stop an acute asthma attack. They will not stop an asthma attack after you have started wheezing.

Quick-relief medicines are usually breathed in with an inhaler. Sometimes people may use a nebulizer machine. Other medicines may be inhaled or taken as a pill.

Be sure you know how to use your inhaler the right way. Ask your healthcare provider to show you how to use the inhaler.

You may need a peak flow meter to check how well you are breathing. Your provider will tell you how to use the flow meter to help you take good care of your asthma.

How can I take care of myself?

It's important to:

- Learn how to tell when you are starting to have an asthma attack. Your peak flow meter may help.
- Work with your provider on an asthma action plan. This plan helps when you have problems with your asthma.
- Take your medicines exactly as your healthcare provider tells you.
- See your healthcare provider for checkups as often as recommended.
- Get a flu shot every October.
- Ask your healthcare provider about other vaccinations including the pneumonia shot.
- Stay away from smoke and other things that cause an asthma attack.
- Talk to your provider about ways you can keep your home free of things that could make it hard to breathe.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if:

- It is hard for you to breathe well even though you are taking your medicines.
- You have effects that you think are from your medicine.

- You are coughing or wheezing more than normal even though you are taking your medicines.

You may need to go to the emergency room or call 911 if:

- You have an asthma attack that does not get better even though you have used your quick-relief inhaler.

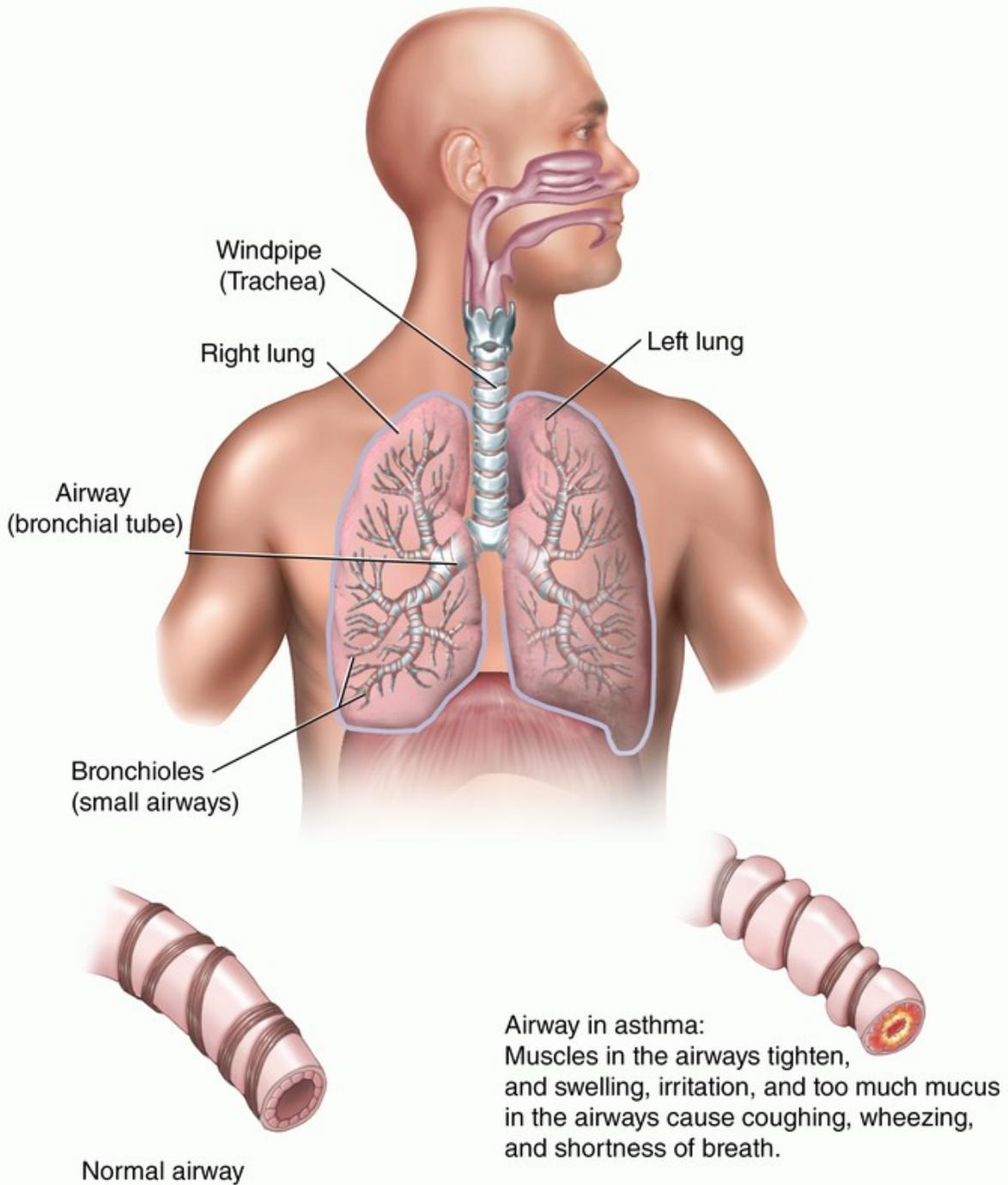
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Developed by Change Healthcare.

Published by Change Healthcare.

Produced in Cork, Ireland.

Asthma



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My Asthma Action Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____

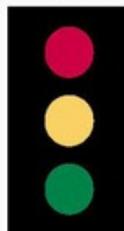
Healthcare Provider: _____

Healthcare Provider phone # _____

Emergency Contact phone # _____

Medical Record # _____

Traffic light colors help you learn about asthma symptoms and what to do.



RED means **I FEEL AWFUL**. Get help right away.

YELLOW means **I do NOT feel good**. Add a relief medicine to feel better fast.

GREEN means **I feel GOOD**. Use long-term control medicine.

I feel GOOD

- Breathing is easy.
- No cough or wheeze.
- Can work and play

Peak Flow Numbers: _____ to _____

Use asthma long-term control medicine.

Medicine:	How taken:	How much:	When:
_____	_____	_____	_____ times a day
_____	_____	_____	_____ times a day
_____	_____	_____	_____ times a day

20 minutes before exercise or sports, take _____ puffs of this quick-relief medicine: _____

I do NOT feel good

- Cough
- Wheeze
- Hard to breathe
- Wake up at night.
- Can do some, but not all activities.

Peak Flow Numbers: _____ to _____

TAKE _____ puffs of quick-relief medicine. If not back in the Green Zone within 20 to 30 minutes, take _____ more puffs.

Medicine:	How taken:	How much:	When:
_____	_____	_____	every _____ hours

KEEP USING long-term control medicine.

Medicine:	How taken:	How much:	When:
_____	_____	_____	_____ times a day
_____	_____	_____	_____ times a day

Call healthcare provider if quick-relief medicine does not work OR if these symptoms happen more than twice in a week.

I feel AWFUL

- Medicine does not help.
- Breathing is hard and fast.
- Can't walk well.
- Can't talk.
- Feel very scared.

Peak Flow Number is Lower than _____

Get help now! Take these quick-relief medicines until you get emergency care.

Medicine:	How taken:	How much:	When:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Call 911 if can't walk or talk because it is too hard to breathe OR if lethargic OR if skin is sucked in around neck and ribs during breaths OR if lips or fingernails are gray or blue.