

Asthma and Smoking

KEY POINTS

- Asthma is a chronic lung disease that can cause coughing, wheezing, or shortness of breath.
 - People with asthma who live in a household with a smoker have more breathing problems, need to take more medicines, and have more emergency room visits than people who live in smoke-free homes.
 - Quitting smoking and limiting exposure to tobacco smoke can help prevent problems for you.
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How does tobacco smoke affect people with asthma?

Asthma is a long-lasting (chronic) lung disease. It can cause wheezing, coughing, or shortness of breath. It can cause chest tightness.

Asthma symptoms are caused by two different problems in the airways.

- One problem is that the muscles in the airways tighten up, which causes chest tightness and wheezing.
- The other problem is swelling, irritation and too much mucus in the airways.

Tobacco smoke irritates and damages the airways in several ways. Smoke is made up of chemicals and very small pieces of ash that stay in the air long after the cigarette, pipe, or cigar is out. When a person with asthma breathes in these airborne chemicals and ash, it irritates the lining of the airways. This causes the muscles around the airways to squeeze tight, making it hard for the child to breathe.

Breathing secondhand smoke, also called passive smoking, is also harmful to the lungs. People who breathe secondhand smoke often have symptoms such as coughing, wheezing and a tight feeling in the chest. Thirdhand smoke is made up of harmful chemicals left on surfaces from tobacco smoke. It stays on carpet, floors, walls, clothes, and other surfaces for a long time. You can be exposed to these chemicals by touching a surface and then touching your mouth or nose.

Even the smell of smoke on clothes can trigger asthma symptoms in someone with sensitive airways. People with asthma should not spend any time in places where there is smoke. No one should smoke in the home, and no one should smoke in a car that a person with asthma rides in. Airing out cars and homes does not get rid of thirdhand smoke.

People with asthma who live in a household with a smoker have more breathing problems, need to take more medicines, and have more emergency room visits than people who live in smoke-free homes.

E-cigarettes also cause problems. They do not produce water vapor. They produce very fine particles of chemicals that may be more concentrated than chemicals in

tobacco cigarettes. These chemicals can irritate your lungs and worsen breathing problems, including asthma. The vapor from e-cigarettes may also be harmful to people who are near someone who is vaping, similar to secondhand smoke. For this reason, many cities have passed laws against vaping in public places.

If you smoke or use e-cigarettes, it is very important to quit smoking or vaping. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit.

What will help me stop smoking?

The American Lung Association gives the following tips:

1. Set a date for quitting.
2. Remove cigarettes, ashtrays, matches, and lighters from your home, workplace, and car.
3. Keep a supply of low-calorie snacks handy.
4. Spend more time in places that don't allow smoking.
5. Tell everyone you're going to stop smoking.
6. Plan what you'll do instead of smoking.
7. Call a friend if you need help.
8. Think about using nicotine replacement gum or patches. The nicotine gum or patches help you cut your craving for nicotine. You can also ask your healthcare provider for a prescription medicine to help you quit.

For more information, contact:

- American Lung Association
800-548-8252
<https://www.lung.org>

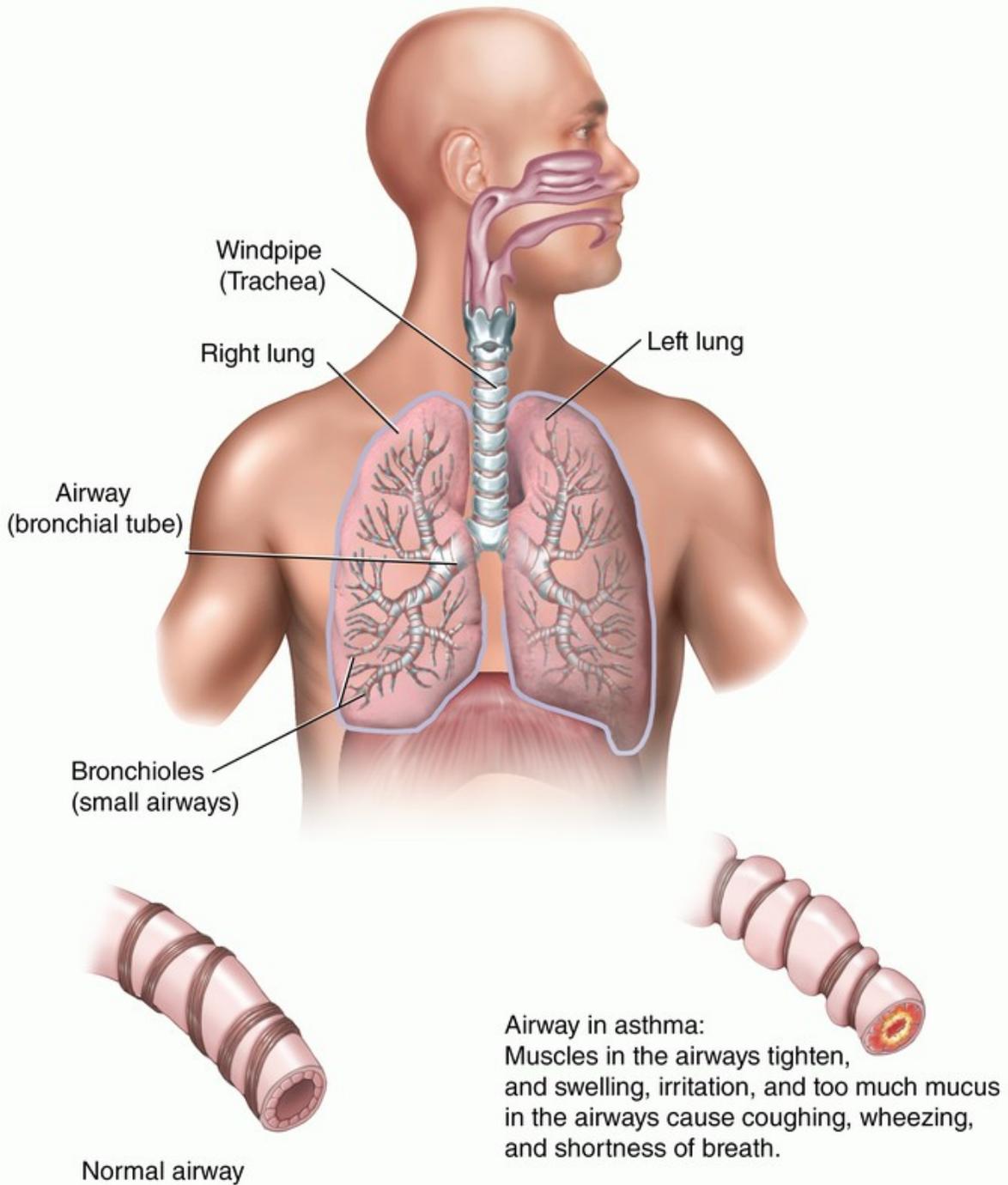
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