

# About Asthma

## Did You Know?

Asthma is a disease of the lungs that makes breathing difficult. Asthma symptoms start when infections, allergens or other irritants cause the lining of the airways to become swollen or narrow. The muscles around the airways can then contract, which can lead to an asthma attack.

### Symptoms of asthma include but are not limited to:

- Coughing
- Shortness of Breath
- Tightness in the Chest
- Wheezing



## Asthma Facts

- 8.3% of Americans have asthma
- Asthma accounts for **13.8 million missed school days** each year, and **14.2 million lost work days in adults**.
- Asthma is **often hereditary**
- **Weather conditions can worsen an asthma condition**, so watch out for extremely dry, wet or windy weather

### How Can I Tell if my Asthma is Getting Worse?

Signs that your asthma is not well-controlled include:

- Having symptoms at night (like coughing)
- A drop in peak flow
- The need to use your rescue medicine twice a week or more

### How Do Allergies Affect My Asthma?

Allergies are a common trigger and cause of asthma for many people. Dust, molds, pollen and pet dander can trigger asthma symptoms or an asthma attack.

### How Can I Control My Asthma Symptoms?

Prevention is the best treatment. Eliminate your asthma triggers by treating and building a tolerance to your allergies. Make sure to keep track of your symptoms and take medicine as prescribed.

### Would Allergy Drops or Shots Help?

Yes! Treating your allergies with allergy drops or shots is proven to reduce the risk of developing future asthma. Since allergies are a common trigger, treating your allergies usually makes your lungs less reactive, too. That means fewer asthma flare ups and fewer medications.

# Managing Asthma At Home

## Preventive Maintenance Medications (taken daily)

- **Inhaled Corticosteroids** - i.e. Flovent, Pulmicort, Qvar
- **Anti-Leukotrienes** - i.e. Montelukast, Singulair
- **Combination Inhalers** - i.e. Advair, Breo, Symbicort

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## Quick Relief Medications (taken occasionally)

- **Albuterol "Rescue" Inhalers** - i.e. ProAir, Proventil, Ventolin
- **Bronchodilators**- i.e. Atrovent
- **Oral Steroids** - i.e. Prednisone, Prednisolone

## Things You Can Do At Home To Limit Allergen Exposure

- Keep the windows of your home and car closed
- Change the filter on your heating and cooling system every three months
- Address any leaks in your home, such as around faucets or shower heads
- Use an air conditioner or dehumidifier to keep the humidity level under 50%
- Wash bed sheets in hot water once a week to reduce dust mites
- Cover mattresses and pillows in a zip-up anti-allergen cover
- Keep pets out of the bedroom
- Don't allow smoking in the house or car

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## Call Your Doctor Or Seek Emergency Care if You Experience Any of the Following Symptoms:

- Rescue medicine doesn't relieve your symptoms
- Peak flow keeps dropping after treatment or falls below 50% of your best
- Fingernails or lips turn blue
- Trouble walking or talking
- Neck, chest or ribs are pulled in with each breath
- Flared nostrils while breathing
- Extreme difficulty breathing
- Heartbeat is very fast