



## HEALTH INFORMATION

# Asthma

Asthma Awareness



## What is Asthma

**Asthma is a condition which affects the airways – the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. These are almost always red and sensitive (inflamed). Asthma symptoms are wheezing, tightness in the chest, shortness of breath and coughing.**

## What is a Trigger?

A trigger is anything that irritates the airways leading to the symptoms of asthma.

Common triggers include: colds or flu for those with asthma, the airways can react badly, when they have a cold or viral infection or when they come into contact with an asthma trigger.

Everyone's asthma is different and they can often have several triggers cigarette smoke, exercise or allergies to things like: pollen, house-dust mites, furry animals and birds.

## What causes Asthma?

- Asthma, like its related allergic conditions, eczema and hay fever, often runs in families and may be inherited
- Other environmental factors such as modern lifestyle, housing, diet could also be responsible causes
- Smoking in pregnancy increases the chances of a child developing asthma
- There is some evidence that traffic pollution and poor air quality can be a trigger if you already have asthma

Asthma cannot be "cured" but with the correct treatment, monitoring and avoiding triggers, it can be controlled.

## How is Asthma treated?

There are two main types of asthma treatment - Preventers and Relievers

**Preventers** - usually come in brown, white, red, or orange inhalers, sometimes taken in tablet form. These work over time to calm the inflammation making it less likely to react badly to a trigger. They must be taken daily even when feeling well to give full protection.

**Relievers** - are usually blue inhalers you need to take them as soon as asthma symptoms start. They work by quickly relaxing the muscles that surround the airways making it easier to breathe.

## How is Asthma treated?

- Take your treatment regularly
- Get to know your triggers and avoid them where possible
- Keep a peak flow diary this gives you advance warning of changes
- Ask your Asthma Nurse about writing an asthma action plan

## How to deal with an attack

1. Take the blue reliever inhaler
2. Sit upright and loosen tight clothing
3. If no immediate improvement, continue to take one puff of inhaler every minute for five minutes or until symptoms improve
4. If symptoms do not improve in 5 mins or if you are in doubt-call 999
5. Continue to take one puff of your reliever inhaler every 5 minutes until help arrives

## For more information

Asthma UK 08457 01 02 03

[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

[www.asthma.org.uk/advice/living-with-asthma/work](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/living-with-asthma/work)

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/asthma-at-work-your-charter.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/asthma-at-work-your-charter.pdf)

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