



About Asthma

Affecting an estimated 17 million people in the United States and causing more than 3,300 deaths per year, asthma is a chronic, life long, condition with symptoms such as chest tightness, frequent cough, wheezing and/or shortness of breath. Asthma can not only be serious, it can also be life threatening. The good news is that asthma can be managed so an asthma patient can live a normal, healthy life.

The most common chronic disease among children, sometimes a child's symptoms will go away as he or she matures. Unfortunately, there is always a possibility that symptoms will recur for these children later in life. Other people get asthma for the first time when they are older.

Asthma is caused by inflamed and constricted airways making it hard to move air in and out of the lungs. The muscles of the airways tighten and become swollen and irritated, making it hard to breathe. There are many triggers to asthma symptoms:

- Allergens such as pollen, mold, dust mites and pet dander.
- Irritants such as perfume, paint, deodorizers and smoke.
- Respiratory infections
- Medications such as aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and certain beta-blockers.
- Emotional anxiety or stress
- Acid reflux
- Food
- *Exercise* ([link to exercise induced asthma](#))

When someone with asthma is exposed to a trigger, the insides of the airways make extra mucus and swell even more. This narrows the space for the air to move in and out of the lungs. The muscles that wrap around the airways can also tighten, making breathing even harder leading to an asthma attack.

No one really knows the exact cause of asthma. Asthma does tend to run in families and may be inherited. Many times, there is an allergic component to asthma. Contact with allergens, certain irritants and exposure to viral infections as an infant or in early childhood when the immune system is developing have been linked to developing asthma. Irritants and air pollution also play a significant role in adult onset asthma.

Although asthma has no cure, proper treatment is essential. There are several ways to treat asthma. Avoidance of triggers is always best. Even without symptoms, airway inflammation may still be present increasing the likelihood of an asthma attack when triggers are present. Since many people with asthma have allergies as well, proper treatment of allergies is instrumental in an effective treatment plan. There are also medications which can help:

- Quick relief medications, such as bronchodilators, will help open the airways.
- Long-term medications, like Advair, Asmanex, Symbicort, Dulera or Qvar, are taken to control airway inflammation and treat symptoms on a regular basis.

If you have questions about Asthma, feel free to contact our office. One of our staff would be happy to answer your questions about Asthma and Asthma treatment options offered at Allergy & Asthma Clinics of Ohio.