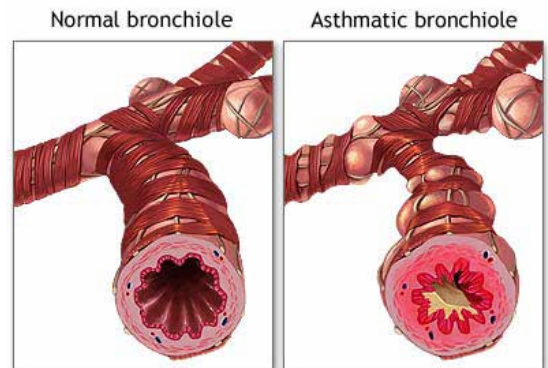


What Is Asthma?

Asthma is a long-standing (chronic) disease of the airways that causes three changes in the lungs:

- Inflammation (swelling) of the lining of the airways
- Tightening of the bands of smooth muscles surrounding the airways, reducing air flow
- Production of excess mucus that further narrow airways

Asthma is a disease that cannot be cured, but can be controlled.



When Breathing Isn't Easy



→ **22.2 million** Americans have asthma.

→ In 2004, **3,780** deaths were attributed to asthma.

→ Close to **1.8 million** emergency room visits were attributed to asthma in 2005.

→ In 2004, asthma accounted for an estimated **14.5 million** lost work days.

- The annual direct health care cost of asthma is approximately **\$14.7 billion**.
- **6.8 million** children under age 18 are affected by asthma, making it the most common chronic disorder in childhood.
- Asthma is the **third** leading cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15.
- An estimated **400,000 to one million** asthmatic children have their condition worsened by exposure to secondhand smoke.

The Code of Asthma

Asthma symptoms will likely vary for each person. The primary signs of an asthma episode may include:

- ✓ Wheeze
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath
- ✓ Chest tightness
- ✓ Retractions (skin pulled tight between ribs)

All symptoms should be taken seriously. A cough may be the only symptom. Some people with asthma may never wheeze. The "code of asthma" is as unique as each person.

Approaching An Asthma Attack



An asthma episode can be triggered by a common substance or an environmental condition. These substances or conditions can cause asthma symptoms to begin or get worse. What triggers one person to have an asthma episode, may not affect another.

Individuals with asthma should avoid their triggers, and when possible, remove the trigger completely.

Here are some asthma triggers:

Smoke

Any type of smoke
Cigarette, cigar, wood, leaf burning

Emotions

Crying, laughing, stress

Dust

Including chalk dust

Strong Smells

Perfumes, cleaning solutions, paint, fumigation, room deodorizers, aerosols, traffic fumes

Mold

Restrooms, basements, old books/newspapers, athletic mats, humidifiers, plants, aquariums, leaky roofs

Weather

Cold/Dry Air or High Humidity

Animals

Animals with fur or feathers

Dust Mites

Found in carpeting, pillows, upholstery, stuffed animals, bedding, draperies

Medical Conditions

Acid reflux, sensitivity to aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, beta-blockers

Exercise

Exercise induced asthma is often caused by cold, dry air.

Food

Peanuts, eggs, dairy, fish, wheat, sulfites, food preservatives, MSG, food dyes

Infections

Colds, upper respiratory track infections, influenza, sinusitis, RSV may aggravate asthma symptoms

Pollens

Flowering trees/plants, cut flowers, grasses, weeds, gardens, seasonal decorations