



Asthma is a condition that affects the airways – the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs. When a person with asthma comes into contact with an asthma trigger, the muscle around the walls of the airways tightens so that the airway becomes narrower. The lining of the airways becomes inflamed and starts to swell. Often sticky mucus or phlegm is produced. All these reactions cause the airways to become narrower and irritated – leading to the symptoms of asthma.

The common symptoms of asthma are:

- coughing
- wheezing or a whistling noise in the chest
- getting short of breath
- a tight feeling in the chest.

You should be on the lowest dose of medicine to control your asthma. Once your asthma is under control, your doctor or nurse may consider adjusting your medicines to see if your symptoms will stay controlled on a lower dose. It is important that your doctor or nurse reviews your symptoms after your medicines have been adjusted to see what effect it has had.

Your asthma should be reviewed:

- Every year if it is well controlled or more often if your symptoms are difficult to control.
- After one month if your asthma medicines are changed.
- Within 48 hours of treatment for a serious asthma attack to make sure your symptoms are better controlled and again after 2 weeks.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Emergency Services Tel: 999

E12 Health Tel: 020 8553 7440

Asthma UK Tel: 0800 121 62 44, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm to speak to an Asthma Specialist Nurse

Asthma UK website:

<http://www.asthma.org.uk/index.html>





Your Lifestyle

Our behaviours and the lifestyle choices we make have a big impact on our health. If you are overweight, losing weight can help in managing asthma, and combined with a more active lifestyle, can also help to improve lung function.

Exercise

Regular exercise is good for everyone, including people with asthma. The majority of people with asthma should be able to take part in any type of activity or exercise they enjoy, as long as their asthma is under control. **At least 30 minutes of brisk walking five times a week is recommended.**

Current BMI Target BMI Ideal BMI

Nutrition

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is important and the good news is that most people with asthma do not have to follow a special diet. **If you are having trouble losing weight or you need some advice about living healthily you can make an appointment with our 'Healthy Weight Clinic'.**

Smoking

If you smoke and have asthma, you:

- are increasing your risk of an asthma attack
- could be permanently damaging your airways
- could be blocking the benefit of your asthma medicines

If you are having difficulty giving up smoking please make an appointment with our 'Smoking Cessation Clinic'.

Healthy indoor environments

Making your home environment asthma-friendly is an important part of making sure your asthma is well controlled. Possible triggers at home might include:

- House dust mites and pets
- Dampness in housing or lack of central heating in the cold months
- Cleaning and decorating products
- Carpets and furnishings

Asthma is controllable. Please discuss with your GP or nurse; the best way to manage your asthma.

