

Module 1: Basic Facts About Asthma

Contents

- **What is Asthma?**
- **Who Gets Asthma?**
- **How Does Asthma Affect Your Body?**
- **What Causes an Asthma Attack?**

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease that makes it hard to breathe. When someone with asthma is trying to breathe and they cannot get enough air into their body that is called an asthma attack. An asthma attack is very serious and can even lead to death. If a person has asthma, it is very important that he or she understands the disease and knows what they can do to help prevent an asthma attack.



Who Gets Asthma?

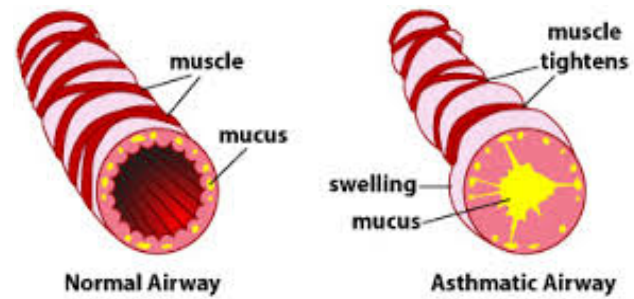
Anybody can get asthma. Some people have it when they are very young and then it goes away. Some people get it when they are older. Sometimes asthma seems to run in families, so it may be an inherited condition, meaning something you are born with.



Asthma also seems to take place in certain communities more than in others. For example, people who live in older buildings which may have mold or cockroaches or built-up dust are more likely to have asthma attacks. People who live around people who smoke or have pets are also more likely to have asthma attacks. It may be that a person is born with a likelihood of getting asthma, but if they live in a place that doesn't have the things that irritate the breathing system, they may be able to avoid an asthma attack.

How Does Asthma Affect Your Body?

When you breathe in air, the air goes down into your lungs through tubes that are called airways. When you have asthma, things in the air you breathe can irritate those airways so that they swell up and tighten which make the airway smaller.



The smaller airway prevents the air you breathe from getting to the lungs where it is needed. When air can't get to the lungs, a person begins to gasp for air, struggling to breathe. It is like staying underwater too long and when you come up, your body struggles to get enough air into your lungs.

What Causes an Asthma Attack?

People with asthma are affected by things around them such as dust, animal hair, smoke, and mold. These are called “triggers” because they can trigger an asthma attack. Different things cause asthma attacks in different people. Some asthma attacks can be “triggered” by the weather or by exercise. If you have asthma, it is very important to know what triggers your asthma attacks so you can avoid those things.



Severe asthma symptoms mean a severe attack – if you experience severe symptoms, take your quick-relief medication and call the doctor or 911 right away

Great job! You're one step closer to finishing the CHECK Asthma Online Program. Hopefully you now know more about asthma and how it affects your body.

Now you can move onto the next topic and learn all about identifying asthma attacks.

