

Asthma

Asthma is a type of allergic disease of bronchus. Affected person's bronchus tends to contract when stimulated by foreign substances. Symptoms include wheezing, a choking sensation in the chest and coughing. In severe case, affected person may have difficulty in breathing. If oxygen supply is insufficient for all parts of the body, the patient will die because of lack of oxygen in the brain.





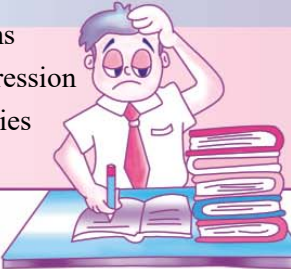
Asthma usually occurs in children. Some cases are hereditary. Affected persons or their family members are likely to have other allergic diseases such as allergic rhinitis, eczema, etc.



Asthma also appears in adults that may be induced by virus or bacteria and is usually not related to hereditary or allergies.



Factors that Induce Asthma


1. Substances in the household that may induce asthma are
 - Dust mite
 - Hair or excretion of pets
 - Pollen of pot plants
 2. Polluted air, e.g. exhaust gas from car, dust and dirt from construction site, cigarette smoke
 3. Cold air
 - The weather turns cold suddenly
 - A sudden change in temperature, e.g. entering/leaving an air-conditioned room
 4. Food or medicine that causes allergic reaction
 5. Respiratory tract infections
 6. Emotional anxiety or depression
 7. Strenuous physical activities
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Preventive Methods


1. Keep your home clean

- Always keep your home clean and well ventilated to prevent accumulation of dust, breeding of dust mites, and mould and dampness
- Use vacuum cleaner or wet mop to clean the floor daily. Clean your home when your child is in school or not at home
- Avoid carpets, velvet upholstered sofa, down pillows and quilts
- Pillows or quilts should be sealed in smooth nylon covers. Bed sheets and quilt covers should be regularly changed and washed with hot water or with 60 degrees Celsius hot water in washing machine frequently (once per week). Latex pillow and cotton blanket are alternatives
- Clothes should be washed frequently and placed in wardrobes. Unwashable clothes should be placed under the sun frequently to kill mites
- Do not grow flowering plants nor keep pets such as cats, dogs or birds
- Use blinds instead of curtains


2. Avoid polluted air

- Keep your home well ventilated
 - Family members should not smoke when the affected person is nearby
 - Avoid going to crowded places such as cinemas or restaurants. Places filled with dust such as construction sites should be avoided
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3. Beware of changes in weather

- When going out in winter or when a cold front arrives, wear enough clothes but avoid down coats or woollen sweaters
 - Avoid drastic changes of temperature, e.g. entering a very cold air-conditioned room on a hot day
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4. Avoid taking food or medicine or using chemicals that has caused allergic reaction before

- Food such as shrimps, crabs or clams
 - Medicine such as aspirin, penicillin
 - Chemicals and volatile liquids such as Dettol, ether or perfume
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5. Treat respiratory tract infections early

- Consult your doctor as soon as possible and take medication as instructed if you suffer from respiratory tract infections such as common cold or influenza

6. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

- Relax and be cheerful
 - Get enough sleep and avoid excessive fatigue
 - Perform appropriate amount of physical activity. Encourage affected persons to participate in sports activities within their physical ability
 - Do warm-up exercise before physical activities
 - Avoid catching cold after sweating during physical activities
 - Do not perform physical activity during an asthma attack
 - Keep a balanced diet. No need to avoid specific food except for those which have caused allergic reaction before
 - Drink warm water to keep bronchi moist
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Management of Asthma Attack



- Always bring along your medication and take it at the earliest sign of an asthma attack
- When the affected person is having an asthma attack, parents should keep calm and take the affected person to a quiet and well ventilated place to rest. Let him/her sit on a chair and rest his/her head on a pillow on the desk
- The illness will deteriorate if the affected person feels uneasy, so parents should try their best to comfort the affected person
- Let the affected person drink warm water to keep the bronchi moist so as to ease breathing
- Take an extra dose of bronchodilator according to doctor's instructions. Use metered dose inhaler if possible because it is the most effective method
- After taking extra medication, if the affected person still wheezes, has difficulty in breathing, is unable to speak properly, shows signs of mental confusion, lips turn blue or sweats, take the affected person to the nearest clinic or Accident and Emergency Department immediately



Advice for Parents



- Avoid asthma inducing factors such as dust
- Your child should take medication according to doctor's instruction and have regular check-ups
- Teach your child and make sure that he/she knows how to use metered dose inhalers
- Treat respiratory tract infections as early as possible
- Make sure your child perform appropriate amount of physical activity
- Give adequate support and encouragement to your child but avoid over-protection which makes your child dependent and spoilt
- Notify the school about your child's illness
- Your child should always carry a medical card stating his/her medical history, medications used, and those medicine or food that had caused allergic reaction before
- When going abroad, make sure to bring along the medical card and a sufficient quantity of the appropriate medication
- Do not smoke



All You Need to
Know About
Asthma

