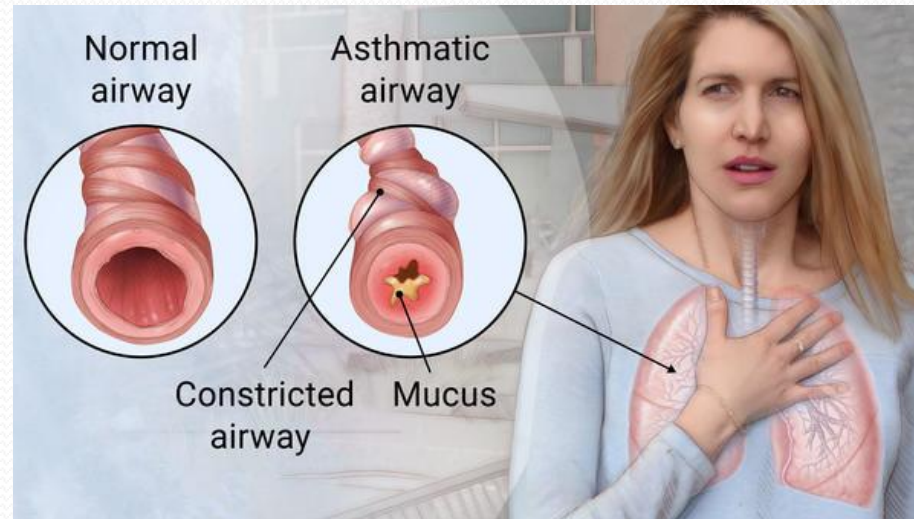


Asthma & Allergy



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What is asthma?



- Asthma is a disease of increased responsiveness or twitchiness of the airways to various stimuli including allergens and irritants that cause obstruction of the airways. Constriction of muscles around the airway and inflammation result in swelling of the lining of the airway and increased secretion of mucous in the airway. This causes difficulty in breathing and cough.

How is asthma different in older adults?

- The senior age group represents the fastest growing segment in our country
- The most common causes of an asthma flare up are a respiratory infection or virus, exercise, allergens, and **air pollution (an irritant)**
- Symptoms: wheezing, cough, shortness of breath, and chest tightness
- Asthma creates a much greater risk for older adults because they are more likely to develop respiratory failure as a result of the asthma, even during mild episodes of symptoms

Allergens & Air Pollution

- Mold
- Dust Mites
- Pollen; tree, grass, flowers
- Pet dander,
- Food allergy, peanuts, seafood...
- Air pollution; smoke, smog,



Asthma: Symptoms & Diagnosis

Triggers- allergy, GERD, sinusitis, pulmonary infection or exposure to a respiratory irritant

Symptoms:

- Persistent or recurrent cough,
- Shortness of breath on exertion (walking, shopping, any normal activities)
- Awaken at night due to respiratory symptoms
- Wheezing

Diagnosis Consideration

Other diseases to be considered when trying to diagnosis asthma in the elderly include:

- COPD,
- Congestive heart failure (CHF),
- Aspiration syndromes,
- Lung cancer, interstitial pulmonary disease
- Other Lung diseases, sarcoidosis, bronchiectasis, pulmonary embolus, pulmonary hypertension,
- Vocal cord dysfunction
- Other cardio/pulmonary diseases.

Who should treat this particular aspect of asthma or allergies?

- Many older patients are treated for asthma by their internist or family physician
- If the asthma symptoms are not under control within three to six months
- If you have severe persistent asthma, or if you are having asthma episodes that need emergency treatment, it may be time to see an asthma specialist
- Allergists/Immunologists or pulmonologists (who specialize in the treatment of lung diseases) are specialists who treat asthma

Treatment

- The goals are improving quality of life: prevent/diminish exacerbation, controlling coughing, decreasing awakenings at night, diminishing breathlessness, improving activity level, while carefully selecting medications to minimize side effects and drug interaction
- Bronchodilator- for short term relief of acute asthma
- Long Term
- Inhaled corticosteroids-
- Oral corticosteroid
- Nebulized bronchodilators

More...

- Smoke cessation
- Environmental controls
- Emergency plan
- Back up medication for flares of asthma
- Immunization for influenza and pneumonia

How to use the Inhaler?

1. Shake the inhaler well before use (3 or 4 shakes)
2. Remove the cap
3. Breathe out, away from your inhaler
4. Bring the inhaler to your mouth. Place it in your mouth between your teeth and close your mouth around it.
5. Start to breathe in **slowly**. Press the top of your inhaler once and keep breathing in slowly until you have taken a full breath.
6. Remove the inhaler from your mouth, and hold your breath for about 10 seconds, then breathe out.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rdb3p9RZoR4>

