

BETTER HEALTH 4 YOU

SMART LOCAL 36 BENEFIT FUND

ASTHMA, ALLERGIES & COPD

Asthma and Exercise

Asthma is a long-term condition causing swelling and narrowing of the airways. The muscles around the airways tighten and extra mucus is produced. These changes make it more difficult to move air in and out of the lungs. Triggers are things that cause asthma flare-ups and worsen symptoms. Triggers may be dust, pollen, pets, infections, cold weather, smoke, air pollution, and exercise.

Exercise is a common trigger for many people with asthma. For some, exercise, and other things, cause asthma symptoms. For others, asthma symptoms only occur with exercise or physical activity. In either case, the term to describe the condition is exercised-induced bronchoconstriction or EIB. (It used to be called exercise-induced asthma.) It means that exercise causes the airways or bronchi to narrow or constrict.

Exercise is important for overall good health and for keeping the lungs and muscles involved in breathing strong. Your body needs exercise. Make sure you work with your health care provider to do it safely and with as few symptoms as possible.

The cause of EIB

Why exercise causes narrowing of the airways is not completely understood. When exercising, the increased breathing in and out through the mouth may cause the airways to dry and cool. This may irritate them and cause symptoms. This is especially true when exercising outside in cold weather. Breathing in air pollution, chemicals, or allergens (like pollen) may also be factors.

Symptoms of exercise-induced asthma

Exercise-induced asthma is characterized by asthma symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, and tightness in the chest within 5 to 20 minutes after starting to exercise. Exercised-induced asthma can also include symptoms such as unusual fatigue and feeling short-of-breath while exercising.

However, don't completely avoid exercise. In fact, exercise is very beneficial to people with asthma, improving their airway function by strengthening their breathing muscles. Consult your doctor for more information.

Controlling EIB

You can take steps to help control EIB or symptoms of asthma when exercising. Again, make sure you

Test Your Asthma Knowledge

1. About one-third of all people with asthma in the US are children.
 A. True B. False
2. Asthma is a disease that rarely complicates pregnancies.
 A. True B. False
3. There is no cure for asthma.
 A. True B. False
4. Tobacco smoke can make asthma attacks more severe.
 A. True B. False
5. Asthma can be caused by emotional stress or other psychological problems.
 A. True B. False

Answers are on the back

develop a plan with the help of your health care provider. And, make sure you do the following:

- Make sure you start slowly. Warm up before you start your actual exercise. And slowly cool down at the end of exercise or activity.
- Make sure you carry your quick-relief inhaler with you. Use it 15 minutes before you start

exercising or as your provider recommended.

- Some people use daily controller medications for EIB. If you do, make sure you take it exactly as instructed.
- Think about exercising indoors if it is very cold or if pollution levels are high.
- If you do exercise outside during cold weather, wear a scarf over your mouth and nose. Some people also use a special device or mask to exercise outdoors when it is very cold.

Recommended Sports and Activities

Any activity can cause asthma symptoms. Sports and activities with short bursts of activity, rather than long periods of activity, are usually better for people with asthma. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, some sports may be less likely to trigger symptoms. The warm, humid environment, the use of upper body muscles, and the body position while swimming may be good for people with asthma. One warning, the chemicals used to treat swimming pools are a problem for some people. Other recommended activities and sports include:

- Baseball
- Bike riding
- Football

- Free downhill skiing
- Golfing
- Gymnastics
- Hiking
- Short-distance track and field
- Surfing
- Walking
- Wrestling

Sports that may increase the chance of symptoms include:

- Basketball
- Cross-country skiing
- Ice hockey
- Long-distance running
- Soccer

However, with proper management and preparation, most people with EIB can take part in any sport or physical activity.



Answers

1. About one-third of all people with asthma in the US are children.

The correct answer is A. True

2. Asthma is a disease that rarely complicates pregnancies.

The correct answer is B. False

3. There is no cure for asthma.

The correct answer is A. True

However, with proper asthma control and management, most people can lead healthy lives.

4. Tobacco smoke can make asthma attacks more severe.

The correct answer is A. True

Tobacco smoke from pipes, cigars, and cigarettes can trigger and worsen an asthma attack. Other types of smoke that can increase the severity of asthma symptoms include smoke from fireplaces and outdoor smog.

5. Asthma can be caused by emotional stress or other psychological problems.

The correct answer is B. False
Although strong emotions can make asthma symptoms more severe, asthma is a physical disease of the lungs and airways.



Long-distance running may not be a good exercise for people with asthma.

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Call me anytime with questions

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