

## Asthma triggers

Everyone's asthma is different and can be triggered by different things.

Common asthma triggers include:

- Viral infections
- Allergies – e.g. to pollen, animals, dust)
- Irritants – e.g. cold air, smoke, chemicals)
- Exercise
- Changing weather

If you know you are going to be in contact with one of your triggers, take your blue reliever inhaler beforehand. Use it every 4 hours if the trigger is still there, for example, if you have a cold or the pollen count is high.

## Asthma plans

You should have a personalised asthma action plan which may be provided by the hospital when you go home or by your GP as part of your asthma review. This plan details which treatments should be used to manage your asthma when you are unwell.

We hope this information sheet has been helpful but it is by no means a replacement for talking to either the Doctor or Nurse. Please ask questions if you feel you need more information or have a look at our website:

[www.beatasthma.co.uk](http://www.beatasthma.co.uk)

# What is asthma?



## Information for Young People

[www.beatasthma.co.uk](http://www.beatasthma.co.uk)

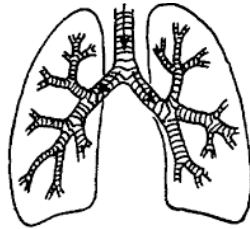
## What is asthma?

Asthma is a common condition that affects children and adults.

The airways (the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs) are more sensitive in people who have asthma and can become swollen if they come into contact with something that irritates the airway. We call these irritants triggers, some of which can be in the normal environment. This swelling makes the airways smaller by narrowing it.

As well as becoming swollen, the muscles around the airway tighten and more mucus is produced than normal - this also narrows the airway.

Most people with asthma can lead a normal life if they take their medications correctly and attend regular reviews.



## What are the symptoms of asthma?

- Shortness of breath
- Cough
- Wheeze
- Tight chest – younger children may complain of a sore tummy

There are 2 main times you may get symptoms:

1. Regular symptoms, called 'interval symptoms', for example at night or during exercise
2. An asthma attack: This is when your symptoms get suddenly worse, for example during a cold or after coming into contact with one of their triggers.

## What medicines are needed?

Most asthma medicines come as an inhaler broadly split into two types - relievers and preventers.

### Relievers

Everyone with asthma should have a reliever inhaler which is usually blue. The reliever works on the muscles around the airways. It helps these muscles to relax by opening up the breathing tubes making it easier to breathe. It relieves symptoms within a few minutes and the effect should last for 4 hours.

You should always use a spacer with your inhaler. As you get older, you may be able to use a different type of inhaler that doesn't need to be used with a spacer. You should ensure you carry your reliever inhaler with you at all times.



### Preventers

These are usually brown, orange or purple and contain steroids. These protect the airway and help to control the swelling. They can also stop the airway being so sensitive to asthma triggers.

It takes several weeks of regular use to start seeing any benefit from a preventer inhaler and up to 6 weeks to work fully. This is why it is important you ensure you take your preventer inhaler every day even if you are well.

To reduce the risk of side effects (sore mouth, sore throat, hoarse voice) you should clean your teeth or rinse your mouth after use.



Some inhalers have a lower environmental impact than others. If you would like to know more, please make an appointment with your asthma nurse or GP to discuss this further.