

Health Net of California, Inc. (Health Net)  
Health Net Community Solutions, Inc.



# Live a Healthy Life While You Keep Asthma Under Control

HEALTH NET HELPS YOU MANAGE YOUR ASTHMA



[HealthNet.com](https://www.healthnet.com)

*Asthma is a long-term condition that affects kids and adults. It happens when the muscles around the small airways in the lungs get inflamed and tighten.*

- In 2019 alone, asthma affected an estimated 262 million people.*
- It caused 461,000 deaths.*

*However, asthma is in your control. You can live a healthy, productive life!*

# What are asthma symptoms?<sup>2</sup>



Asthma happens when the muscles around the small airways in the lungs get inflamed and tighten. The airways narrow and cause symptoms such as:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness

These symptoms come and go. They are often worse at night or during exercise.





## Your Asthma Triggers <sup>2</sup>

Common items or “triggers” can cause asthma symptoms. They can also make them worse. It is hard to find one direct cause of asthma. But, you may get asthma if:

- **A family member has asthma.** You have a higher risk if a close relative, such as a parent or sibling, has asthma.
- **You have other allergic conditions:** eczema, rhinitis (hay fever), etc.
- **You had an early life event** that affected how your lungs developed.



These include:

- Low birth weight
- Air pollution
- Premature birth
- Viral bronchial infections
- Exposure to tobacco smoke

- **Allergens and irritants** can increase the risk of asthma:

- Indoor and outdoor air pollution
- On-the-job exposure to chemicals, fumes or dust
- Animal fur and feathers
- Strong soaps
- House dust mites
- Perfume
- Molds

**There are many types of asthma brought on by different triggers. Knowing what asthma type you have, can help with your treatment.**

**Note: Kids and adults who are overweight have a greater risk of asthma.**

### Stay away from triggers

**Avoid your triggers! Do your part to lessen their impact. Each person’s triggers are different. See your doctor to help you figure out what might trigger your asthma.**

# Types of Asthma<sup>3</sup>

## Adult-Onset Asthma

This is when an adult develops asthma and did not have it as a child. The person avoided triggers for years. However, an asthma symptom develops when someone is triggered as an adult.

Examples include:

- Moving in with a roommate who has a pet
- Working around certain chemical fumes for the first time
- Viral infection

## Allergic Asthma

There is often a link between allergies and asthma. Not everyone who has allergies has asthma. Not everyone with asthma has allergies. But, allergens such as pollen, dust and pet dander can trigger asthma symptoms. They can also trigger asthma attacks in some people.

## Asthma-COPD Overlap Syndrome (ACOS)

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a group of lung diseases. They cause breathing problems and obstruct airflow.

This group can include:

- Severe asthma
- Emphysema
- Chronic bronchitis

Most people with asthma will not develop COPD. And, many people with COPD don't have asthma. Still, it is possible to have both. ACOS occurs when someone has these two diseases at once.

## Exercise-Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)

EIB is the preferred term for exercise-induced asthma. Symptoms develop when airways narrow due to exercise. As many as 90 percent of people with asthma also have EIB, but not everyone with EIB has asthma.

Many elite and world-class athletes have EIB – such as Olympic medal winners. EIB didn't hold them back, and it should not hold you back either! Your allergist can create a treatment plan that includes the exercise you love. Plus, you can feel better while doing it.

## Non-allergenic Asthma

A non-allergenic asthma attack can flare up in extreme weather – either in the summer heat or in the winter cold. Catching a cold or even stress can also trigger your asthma.

## Occupational Asthma

This happens with people who work around:

- Chemical Fumes
- Dust
- Other Irritants in the Air

Asthma caused by another trigger can get worse by airborne particles at work. If you have asthma, and you think your workplace is making your symptoms worse, contact your allergist for help with a treatment plan.



# Control and Prevent Asthma



## Keep your asthma under control

You can prevent – and control – asthma. Keep your asthma under control and live a normal life. You can work, play and avoid sleep disruption caused by asthma symptoms.

Ways to control your asthma:

- Set up routine doctor visits
- Check your breathing (as your doctor recommends)
- Take medicine as advised
- Stay away from things that trigger attacks
- Exercise often
- Learn about triggers, medicines, treatments, etc.

## Asthma medications

The types and doses of asthma medications depend on:

- Age
- Symptoms
- Severity of asthma
- Side effects

## Poor asthma control

Poor asthma control can lead to asthma symptoms.

Contact your doctor if:

- Symptoms wake you up at night
- You use quick-relief medicine more often
- You need to visit the emergency room



## Controller medication vs. rescue medications

*Controller (daily) medications help improve your asthma over time.*



Use it daily to:



lower swelling  
in the lungs



prevent asthma  
attacks



lessen symptoms  
**long-term**

*Rescue (quick relief) medications provide emergency help for asthma attacks*



Take it when  
needed:



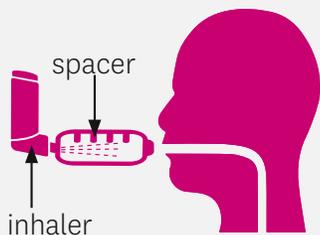
when you have  
trouble breathing



to relieve symptoms  
**short-term**

### Metered dose inhaler

Many asthma medicines let you breathe them right into your lungs through an inhaler. A device called a spacer traps the medicine as it comes out of the inhaler. This makes the medicine easier to breathe in.



Use your inhaler the right way. Here are the steps:

1. Take off the cap and shake the inhaler.
2. Breathe out. Get as much air out of your lungs as you can.
3. Hold the inhaler or spacer in or near your mouth (talk to your doctor)  
Breathe in slowly through your mouth. At the same time,
4. push down on the top of the inhaler. Breathe in as deeply as you can.
5. Hold your breath and slowly count to 10.
6. If you need to take more than one puff of a short-acting bronchodilator, wait one minute between puffs. With other medicines, you don't need to wait.

### What to do in an emergency:

An asthma attack occurs when airways in the lungs become inflamed. This can make it hard to move air in and out. When these symptoms get worse, it becomes very hard to breathe. Follow the steps below to help.

#### What to do in an asthma attack



**1** Sit up straight and try to stay calm.



**2** Take one puff of your reliever inhaler every 30-60 seconds (up to 10 puffs).



**3** If you don't feel better, call 911 for an ambulance.



**4** Wait for an ambulance and repeat step two every 15 minutes.

Asthma attacks can be life threatening. Seek help if symptoms do not get better.

Go straight to the nearest emergency room or call 911 if you have an emergency.

## Teamwork to Manage Your Asthma

Your asthma can change over time. Work closely with your doctor to track your symptoms and adjust your asthma medications.

### Asthma Management Program

Health Net has an Asthma Management Program where you can get help and support. The program can help:

- You know how to manage your asthma
- Reduce and avoid ER visits

Through the Asthma Management Program, you can get:

- Asthma educational materials
- Outreach calls if you are high-risk
- Text messages about your asthma action plan

## Find Out More

Call Health Net's Health Education Information Line

**Toll free 800-804-6074 (TTY:711)**

Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific time.

To learn more about Asthma, visit the Central California Asthma

Collaborative (CCAC) website at <http://cencalasthma.org/>.

<sup>1</sup> [Global burden of 369 diseases and injuries in 204 countries and territories, 1990-2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019.](#)

Lancet. 2020;396(10258):1204-22

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/asthma>, May, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. <https://acaai.org/asthma/types-asthma>

<sup>4</sup> Different types of inhalers may have other guidelines. Check with your health care provider.

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Please always follow your health care provider's instructions. Programs and services are subject to change.

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