

ASTHMA AND EXERCISE

Many people think asthma and wheezing is the same thing. Actually, wheezing is only one sign of asthma, and many other things besides asthma can cause wheezing. Because of this confusion, the term asthma is being replaced with a more accurate description: Reactive Airway Disease (RAD). Those with RAD have bronchial (lung) passages that are more sensitive to irritation than normal. This hypersensitivity leads to inflammation (redness and swelling) in the tiny airways deep in the lungs. The inflammation in turn causes excess mucus production, and tightening of airway muscles that wind around the bronchial tubes like laces. The combination of swelling and muscle tightening all cause narrowing of the airways. Wheezing (whistling and labored breathing) usually results, but a dry cough is sometimes the only sign. Asthma is a disease that interferes with a person's



ability to breathe. In the past, physicians recommended that people with asthma avoid exercise. Physicians now advise their asthmatic patients to participate in regular physical activity in order to maintain or improve their fitness. Exercise is particularly beneficial to asthmatics because their lungs and heart don't need to work as hard when they are physically fit.

In some cases, however, exercise can cause an asthma attack. This is known as exercise-induced asthma. Exercise-induced asthma can occur in almost any person who has asthma,

especially if their asthma is uncontrolled. In some instances, people will only encounter asthma symptoms while exercising. Here are some of the most common symptoms of exercise-induced asthma: Coughing, either during or after exercise. Tightness in the chest area and difficulty breathing. Shortness of breath that persists or worsens after exercise has stopped. Asthma symptoms manifest after exercise has stopped and symptoms peak eight to fifteen minutes after exercise ends. Here are a few simple things to keep in mind in order to help avoid an exercise-induced asthma attack: You should consult your physician before starting an exercise routine so you can choose the type of exercise that is best suited for your current health status. You may also be instructed to take medication prior to exercise to prevent an attack during your workout.

Asthma triggers are likely to be at a minimum if you are exercising in a health club or a gym, than exercising outdoors especially during cold weather. Your asthma is likely to be made worse by the air and by exercise. Don't exercise if you are displaying any signs of breathing problems. If you have any breathing difficulties before you start exercising, such as wheezing or tightness in your chest, you should consider skipping your exercise routine for the day. Even the slightest wheeze can turn into a full-blown attack with little or no warning. Warm up your body and muscles before engaging in a rigorous exercise routine. A warm up period helps to increase your

body's blood flow to your muscles and helps to prevent injury. It can also help to prevent an asthma attack and make any attack that does happen less severe.

Exercise is supposed to be good for the lungs, so why does it leave so many people wheezing? When we work out, our airways lose both heat and moisture, especially if the air is cold and dry. One of those losses -- or both -- seems to help inflame the bronchial tubes and set the stage for an attack. That explains why a winter jog around the neighborhood is more likely than a run in a warm gym to cause an attack. For many people, the best defense is an inhaler

A few more simple changes in your exercise routine can also help prevent attacks. Before exercising, try warming up by walking, stretching, and briefly running in place. When the workout is over, a little more walking and stretching can help keep your airways from tightening up. If possible, avoid exercising in places with a lot of dust, pollen, or air pollutants. Your lungs don't need any extra irritation. And if you're exercising in the cold, wear a scarf or a mask around your mouth and nose area. Above all, stay active. Asthma or no asthma, exercise is the best health tonic around.