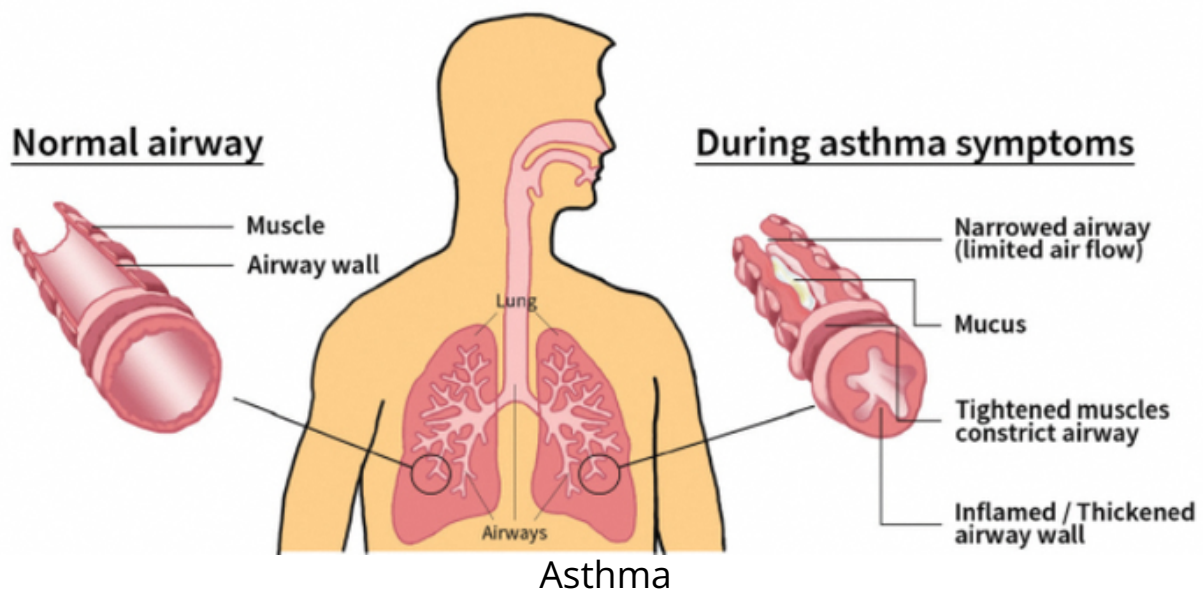


A Guide for Patients and Families

Asthma

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a common respiratory disease in Singapore and worldwide, affecting an estimated 5% of our adults in Singapore.

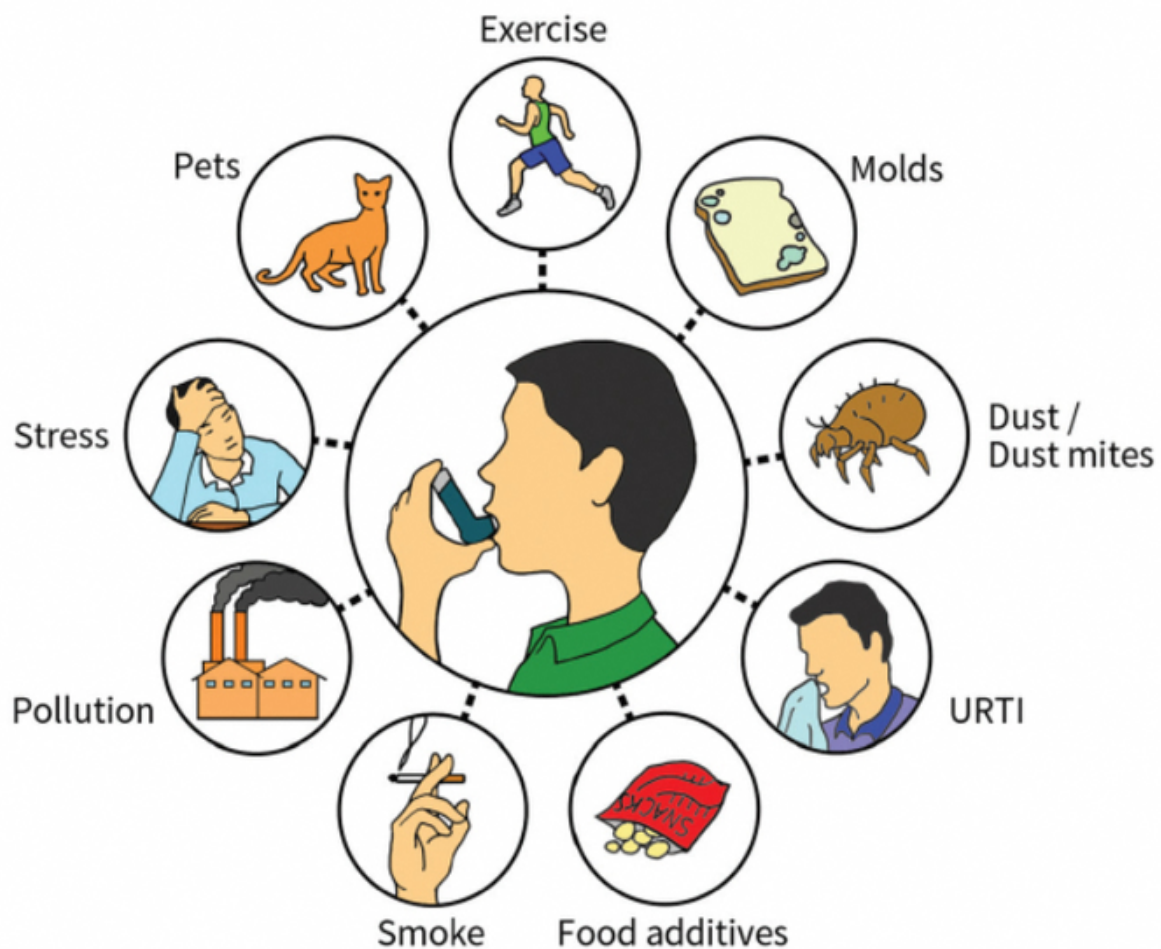


Asthma symptoms are driven by underlying chronic airway inflammation. They can vary in frequency and intensity:

- **Breathlessness:** It is a feeling like you cannot get air out of your lungs.
- **Chest tightness:** This may feel like something is squeezing or sitting on your chest.
- **Wheezing/Noisy breathing:** This is a whistling or squeaky sound that occurs when you breathe.
- **Coughing:** This is often worse at night or early in the morning, making it hard to sleep.

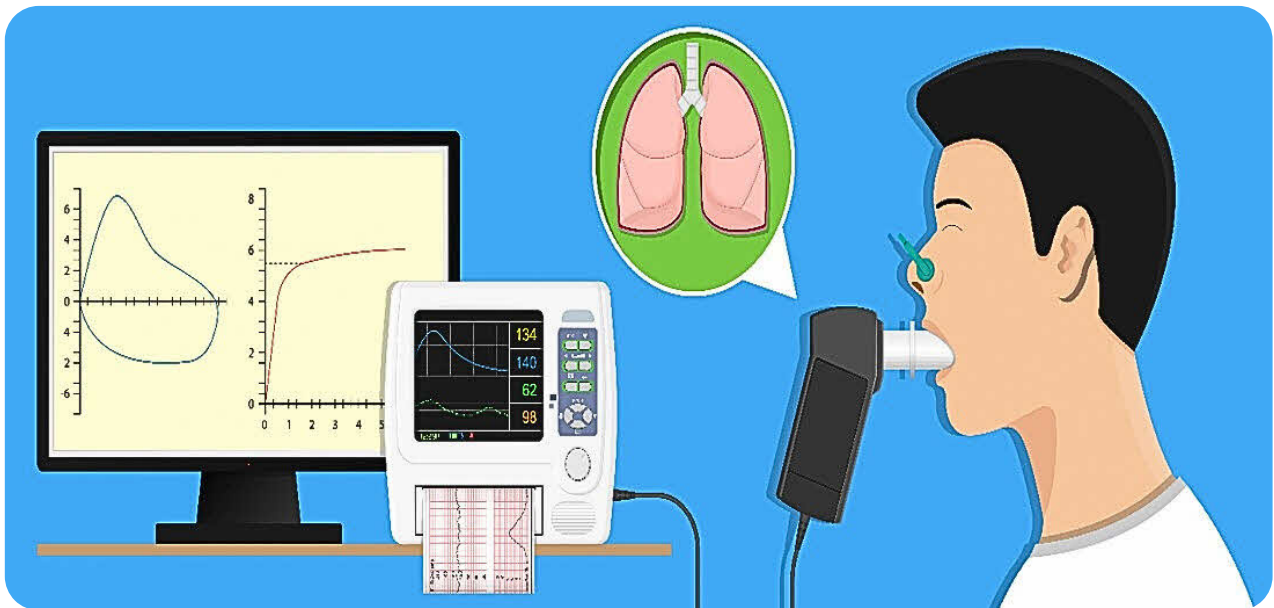
Common Triggers

- **Allergies:** Animals and pets, house dust mites, grass or flower pollen, food or food additives, mould.
- **Irritants:** cigarette smoke, chemicals, air pollutants, certain occupational irritants.
- Respiratory tract infections.
- Weather changes.
- Stress, anxiety or emotional changes.
- Exercise



Common Tests to Evaluate Asthma

- Peak flow measurements.
- Pre and post bronchodilator spirometry (Lung Function Test).
- Fractional exhaled nitric oxide (FeNO).
- Bronchoprovocation test to measure airway sensitivity.
- Skin prick test to common allergens that can affect you.
- Full blood count.



Care and Management

The aim of treatment is to control asthma symptoms and prevent asthma attacks.

ASTHMA MEDICATIONS

Asthma is mainly treated with inhaled medications. Inhalers are devices that deliver these medications directly into your lungs.



Treatments for Asthma



There are 2 main types of asthma inhalers:

1. PREVENTER INHALERS

- These contain steroids which is the main treatment for asthma.
- The steroids reduce the airway inflammation in the asthmatic lungs and help to control your asthma symptoms.
- These also make the lungs less sensitive to triggers and help to prevent asthma attacks.
- You should take your preventer inhaler regularly even when you are feeling well.



Regular use of your preventer inhaler treats your asthma. Please take your preventer inhaler even when you are well!

2. RELIEVER INHALERS

- These provide quick relief of your asthma symptoms by helping the airways to open up.
- However, using your reliever inhaler for three or more times a week may be a sign that your asthma is not well controlled.
- Do not rely solely on your reliever inhaler. It may relieve your symptoms, but it does not treat the underlying inflammation in the asthmatic lungs.



Using your reliever inhaler alone or overusing your reliever inhaler puts you at risk of serious asthma attacks and dying from asthma!

Treatments for Asthma

HOW TO USE YOUR INHALERS?



There are different inhaler devices and administration methods.

Please consult your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician if you are unsure of how to use your inhalers.

Inhaler techniques videos in 4 different languages



English



Mandarin



Malay



Tamil

Treatments for Asthma

ORAL MEDICATIONS

- Leukotriene antagonists like montelukast are sometimes prescribed in asthma patients with allergic rhinitis.
- Short courses of oral prednisolone are prescribed for serious asthma exacerbations.
- Long term oral steroid therapy may be used in a small proportion of patients with more severe form of asthma.



If you experience side effects from your medications, please seek medical attention or discuss with your doctor before stopping the treatment



If you have any doubts or concerns with regards to your asthma treatment, do have a discussion with your regular asthma doctor.

LIVING WITH ASTHMA

You can still lead a normal and healthy lifestyle even if you have asthma.



- **Regular preventer use.** Do not rely on reliever inhaler alone as it does not treat the airway inflammation in asthma.



- **Regular follow up with your asthma doctor helps to keep your asthma under control.**



- **Be familiar with your personalized Asthma Action Plan.**



- **Avoid or reduce exposure to your asthma triggers** (house dust mites, animals, certain food, chemicals, air pollutants).



- **Smoking cessation is highly recommended.** There are medications and strategies to help you quit smoking successfully.



- **Regular vaccination such as yearly influenza vaccination is encouraged.**



- **Keep up an active lifestyle.**