

## ASTHMA

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a long term lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways (tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs). There is no cure for asthma but the symptoms can be controlled.

### What are the symptoms of asthma?

- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Coughing and wheezing when exhaling often worsened by a cold or flu virus

### What are the causes of asthma?

Asthma can be triggered by different irritants and affect people differently. It can be caused by a combination of the environment and genetic factors. Some triggers include

- Pollen, mold, animal dander, dust mites and cockroaches
- Respiratory infections
- Physical activity (exercise induced asthma)
- Cold air
- Pollutants in the air and irritant like smoke
- Certain medications including beta blockers, aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications
- GERD (where stomach acid backs up into the throat)
- Allergic reactions to some foods such as peanuts or shellfish

### What are some risk factors?

- Having a blood relative with asthma
- Having hay fever or a skin condition like eczema
- Being a smoker or exposed to second hand smoke
- Having a mother who smoked while pregnant
- Being exposed to certain chemicals, pollution, or fumes

### What are some of the complications?

- Sick days from work or school
- Having symptoms that interfere with activities, sleeping, work and recreation
- Permanent narrowing of the airways

### What are some of the treatments and medications?

Long term control and prevention of attacks are the goal. Avoid known triggers. Staying healthy can reduce the possibility of asthma attacks.

Depending how well your asthma is controlled will determine the kind of medication and how often you will need to use it.

- Short acting beta agonist – open up airways for quick relief (albuterol, Ventolin, ProAir)
- Inhaled corticosteroids- have a low risk of side effects and are safe for long term use (Flovent, Asmanex, Qvar Aerobid and others)
- Leukotriene modifiers – help to prevent asthma symptoms for up to 24 hours (Singulair)
- Long-acting beta agonists (LABAs) open airways and reduce inflammation(must only be taken with an inhaled steroid)
- Combination Inhalers – contain LABA and a corticosteroid (Advair, Symbicort). These medications may increase risk of severe asthma attack