

ASTHMA & SMOKING



**ASTHMA
AUSTRALIA**

ASTHMA & SMOKING

This brochure explains the link between asthma and smoking. **Smoking is one of the most common triggers for asthma** - a condition that affects the airways and makes it hard to breathe.

Most people know smoking is not good for their health but are unaware of the negative impact it can have on their asthma.

The combination of asthma and smoking affects:

- The person smoking the cigarettes
- Family members, children, partners and people around you
- People not even born yet – your children’s future children!

WHAT IS ASTHMA?

Asthma affects our breathing and our lungs. People with asthma have sensitive airways. These airways are more likely to react to triggers, such as smoking or exposure to smoke. The lining of the airways is thicker and inflamed. When a person with asthma is having an asthma flare-up:

- Muscles around the airway squeeze tight
- Airways swell and become narrow
- Airways become thick with mucus

This is why it is difficult for people with asthma to breathe.



WHAT ARE ASTHMA SYMPTOMS?

People with asthma can have a range of symptoms:

- Breathlessness
- Wheezing
- Tight chest
- Persistent cough

Symptoms often occur at night, early in the morning or during/after activity.

A person's asthma symptoms can vary over time - sometimes they will have no symptoms, especially when asthma is well-controlled.

Symptoms often vary from person to person.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU HAVE ASTHMA & YOU SMOKE?

If someone with asthma is smoking, it can make their asthma worse by:

- Increasing asthma symptoms (feel worse, more often)
- Increasing the risk and frequency of asthma flare-ups
- Reducing the likelihood of achieving good asthma control
- Accelerating long term decline in lung function
- Reducing the effectiveness of preventer medications, which can mean higher doses of preventer to receive the same benefits to asthma as non-smokers

Smoking can cause an irreversible lung condition known as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Approximately 7.5 % of Australians over the age of 40 have COPD (about 1 in 13 people). The combination of asthma and smoking increases the likelihood of permanent damage to your lungs, reduced lung function and being diagnosed with COPD.

HOW DOES PASSIVE SMOKING (EXPOSURE TO SECOND HAND SMOKE) AFFECT YOU IF YOU HAVE ASTHMA?

Passive smoking occurs when non-smokers breathe in the harmful side-stream smoke of others.

If people smoke around you it can:

- Cause similar problems to those caused by smoking
- Increase the risk and frequency of asthma flare-ups
- Increase the need for asthma medications
- Make airways more sensitive to other triggers (e.g. pollen)
- Reduce lung function

Passive smoking can be particularly harmful to young children and lead to childhood respiratory problems and other childhood conditions.

WHAT DOES REDUCED LUNG FUNCTION MEAN?

Reduced lung function can be like having asthma symptoms all the time. Even with medication the airways never return to normal size. This can make simple things like walking around the house, playing with your kids/ grandkids or getting a couple of things from the shops feel like you are running a marathon.

WHAT ABOUT E-CIGARETTES?

Electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes deliver nicotine (although some are nicotine free) through a battery powered system. They are often made to resemble the look of cigarettes or cigars and produce a mist for inhalation to simulate the act of smoking tobacco cigarettes.

There is currently not enough evidence to suggest that e-cigarettes are safe to use, or that they help people to quit smoking. The effects on lung function are also unclear. You should speak to your doctor about evidence-based strategies to help you quit smoking.

It is recommended that precautions be taken, and the inhalation of any product is avoided, particularly around children and people with asthma. Any inhaled substance may flare-up asthma, causing you to have ongoing symptoms, increase the frequency of symptoms and even cause life-threatening asthma attacks.

THERE ARE SO MANY BENEFITS TO QUITTING SMOKING

Most people who smoke want to quit and wish that had never taken up smoking in the first place.

In terms of your asthma, if you quit smoking:

- You will have less asthma symptoms – though some people when quitting may notice increased coughing for a while, this is a normal reaction as your lungs recover
- Your asthma medication will work better – so you will feel better
- You will have more money
- You'll be more able to do the things that are important to you

Overall, this will improve how you feel and let you live well with your asthma.

YOU CAN GET HELP TO QUIT SMOKING

The decision needs to come from you! Don't be discouraged if you don't quit for good the first time you try. Most people try many times before they quit for good. The important thing to remember is to never give up giving up.

 **Quitline® 13 7848**

**THINK ABOUT
QUITTING & GIVE IT A GO!**

SUPPORT IS A PHONE CALL OR CLICK AWAY

There are many ways to help you quit smoking.

Speak to your doctor about medications to help you quit and ring the Quitline.

The Quitline is a free service staffed by experienced quit smoking counsellors who can support you while you try to quit. The Quitline has Indigenous Australian phone counsellors who can provide support and advice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.



quitnow.gov.au

has a great 'quit now calculator' to help you work out what smoking is costing you

[My QuitBuddy](#)

a downloadable app for smart phones

icanquit.com.au

sign up for 'my quit journey'

nosmokes.com.au

a website for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders which uses storytelling, games, videos and animations to talk about smoking

You can also speak to your doctor, pharmacist or contact Asthma Australia about your asthma and your plan to quit.

Think about quitting and give it a go!

ASTHMA ASSIST

Register with Asthma Assist to receive free asthma information. Visit asthma.org.au or

CALL 1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)

ASTHMA FIRST AID

1



SIT THE PERSON UPRIGHT

- Be calm and reassuring
- Do not leave them alone

2



GIVE 4 SEPARATE PUFFS OF BLUE/GREY RELIEVER PUFFER

- Shake puffer
- Put 1 puff into spacer
- Take 4 breaths from spacer
 - **Repeat** until 4 puffs have been taken

OR give 2 separate inhalations of Bricanyl (6 years or older)
OR give 1 inhalation of Symbicort Turbuhaler (12 years or older)
OR give 2 puffs of Symbicort Rapihaler through a spacer

If no spacer available: Take 1 puff as you take 1 slow, deep breath and hold breath for as long as comfortable. Repeat until all puffs are given

3



WAIT 4 MINUTES

- If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above

OR give 1 more inhalation of Bricanyl

OR give 1 more inhalation of Symbicort Turbuhaler

OR give 2 puffs of Symbicort Rapihaler through a spacer

IF THERE IS STILL NO IMPROVEMENT

4



DIAL TRIPLE ZERO (000)

- Say 'ambulance' and that someone is having an asthma attack
- Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives

OR give 1 inhalation of a Bricanyl or Symbicort Turbuhaler every 4 minutes – up to a max of 3 more inhalations of Symbicort Turbuhaler

OR give 2 puffs of Symbicort Rapihaler through a spacer every 4 minutes – up to a max of 6 more puffs of Symbicort Rapihaler

CALL EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY AND DIAL TRIPLE ZERO (000) IF:

- the person is not breathing
- the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse or is not improving
- the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- you are not sure if it is asthma
- **the person is known to have anaphylaxis – follow their Anaphylaxis Action Plan, then give Asthma First Aid**

Blue/grey reliever medication is unlikely to harm, even if the person does not have asthma.



Translating and
Interpreting Service
131 450

1800 ASTHMA
(1800 278 462)

asthma.org.au

This brochure has been developed for the community by Asthma Australia and Quitline.

It provides basic facts about:

- Asthma & smoking
- Tips on quitting smoking
- Support services available

Other Asthma Australia brochures:

- Asthma Basic Facts
- Asthma Medications & Devices
- Things to Ask & Tell Your Doctor
- Asthma & Pregnancy



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All Asthma Australia information is consistent with the National Asthma Council's, The Australian Asthma Handbook (2019).

Asthma Australia information does not replace professional medical advice. People should ask their doctor any questions about diagnosis and treatment.

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