

# STAY WELL WITH ASTHMA THIS SPRING



The spring season can often bring additional challenges for people with asthma. Follow our spring asthma checklist to better manage your asthma and allergies.



## SPRING ASTHMA TIPS

### 1 Be aware of high pollen days

If you experience hay fever and/or pollen is a trigger for your asthma, it is important to be aware of when high levels of pollen are present in the air.

On high pollen days, close your windows and doors. If you have an air conditioner, make sure it is turned to 'circulate' so it doesn't bring the outdoor pollens inside.

### 2 Treat your hay fever symptoms

Managing hay fever is an important part of overall asthma care as hay fever can make asthma worse and more difficult to control. Treatment of hay fever depends on the severity and frequency of your hay fever symptoms. Treatment options include:

- Antihistamines or decongestants,
- Saline sprays/irrigations,
- Corticosteroid nasal sprays, and
- Allergen Immunotherapy

Speak to your doctor or pharmacist about the best treatment for your asthma and hay fever.

### 3 Household allergens

**Mould** is common in Australian homes and can be a regular trigger for asthma. Mould fragments (or spores) spread in the air and can cause allergic and asthma responses in some people. Allergic and asthma responses may cause inflammation of the airways, which bring on asthma symptoms and may cause serious flare-ups. Effective cleaning and maintenance can minimise the chance of mould spore build-up, and its potential impact on respiratory conditions.

**Dust** for people with asthma, can be one of the biggest triggers for asthma symptoms and flare-ups. It's important people with asthma whose symptoms are triggered by dust and dust mites minimise their exposure to these allergens as much as possible as dust and dust mites can act as irritants for sensitive airways.

### 4 Low allergen gardens

Gardens can harbor allergens that can trigger asthma, hay fever and allergy symptoms. Some top tips to reduce the impact of gardening on your asthma (alongside good asthma management) include:

- Choosing Australian native plants and brightly coloured, large flowering plants that are pollinated by birds/insects rather than wind, as they don't release pollen into the air

- Avoiding plants with strong fragrances or odour (e.g. jasmines), especially planted next to entrances, entrances or windows. Exceptions include roses
- Choosing native or slow-growing, low or no pollen grass that does not require frequent mowing
- Using inorganic mulches such as pebbles or gravel to reduce weeds and mould spores
- Weeding the garden often to avoid them flowering or seeding
- Avoiding compost heaps
- Avoiding gardening on windy days when pollen may be airborne

### 5 Pet allergies

People with asthma have also been known to have allergies, some of which may include animals. If you find that your allergies or asthma symptoms worsen around animals, it is recommended you speak with your doctor about your symptoms and perhaps further allergy testing.

### 6 Thunderstorm Asthma

Thunderstorm asthma can be very serious for people with asthma. If grass pollen is a problem for you then thunderstorms in spring and summer may also affect you.

- Some pollens can burst open and release tiny particles that are concentrated in the wind just before the thunderstorm. These small particles get further into the airways and can trigger asthma symptoms.
- To avoid exposure, stay inside with the windows and doors closed until after the storm has passed.
- People at risk of acute asthma flare-ups triggered by a thunderstorm include those with seasonal hay fever, current asthma, a history of asthma or undiagnosed asthma.
- The risk of thunderstorm asthma is highest in adults who are sensitive to grass pollen and have seasonal hay fever (with or without known asthma). The worst outcomes are seen in people with poorly controlled asthma.
- To reduce the risk of thunderstorm asthma where it is a known trigger, it is recommended to aim for optimum asthma management year-round. This means optimising preventer use during spring thunderstorm season, controlling hay fever, checking pollen levels and avoiding exposure to pollen on these days where possible.

# BE PREPARED FOR SPRING



Good asthma management year-round is the key to ensuring you are ready for spring.



## 1 Visit your doctor for an asthma review

Visit your doctor every 6 – 12 months for an asthma review. With your doctor:

- assess your current level of asthma control
- make sure you are on the right medicines to manage your asthma (e.g. a preventer)
- check your inhaler technique
- ensure your Asthma Action Plan is up to date
- ask about your asthma, your treatment and how to stay healthy during spring

## 2 Get a written Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is something developed with a doctor to help provide clear instructions on what to do when experiencing asthma symptoms or during an asthma flare-up and should include instructions about managing asthma alongside identified triggers.

With your doctor, develop or update your written Asthma Action Plan.

Follow a written Asthma Action Plan for:

- better controlled asthma
- fewer asthma flare-ups
- fewer days off work or school
- reduced reliever medication use
- fewer hospital visits

## 3 Take the Asthma Control Test

If you have experienced any of the following in the last four weeks it indicates your asthma may not be under control.

- daytime asthma symptoms more than 2 days per week
- need for reliever more than 2 days per week
- any limitation on activities due to asthma symptoms
- any asthma symptoms during the night or on waking

Visit [asthma.org.au/asthma-control-test](https://asthma.org.au/asthma-control-test) to get your Asthma Score.

## 4 Preventer - every day, even when well

Preventers work to reduce the inflammation in the airways. Regular use of your preventer makes the airways less sensitive, which reduces the frequency and severity of asthma symptoms (reducing the need for your reliever medication) and the risk of future flare-ups. Daily use of a preventer is key to keeping well.

## 5 Check your device technique

Up to 90% of people are thought to use their inhalers incorrectly, which means the dose of medicine isn't getting into the lungs where it's needed. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to check you are using your inhaler medication device correctly.

## 6 Learn the steps of Asthma First Aid

The Asthma First Aid app is your go-to tool for an asthma emergency. It covers both first aid in the event of an asthma emergency plus the ability to review each of the four first aid steps. Download the Asthma First Aid app from the App Store or Google Play.

For more information on how to manage your spring allergies, call **1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)** and speak with an Asthma Educator or visit [asthma.org.au/spring-asthma](https://asthma.org.au/spring-asthma)