

ASTHMA & SMOKING



This resource 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 not always aware of the negative impact it can have on their asthma.

The combination of asthma and smoking affects:

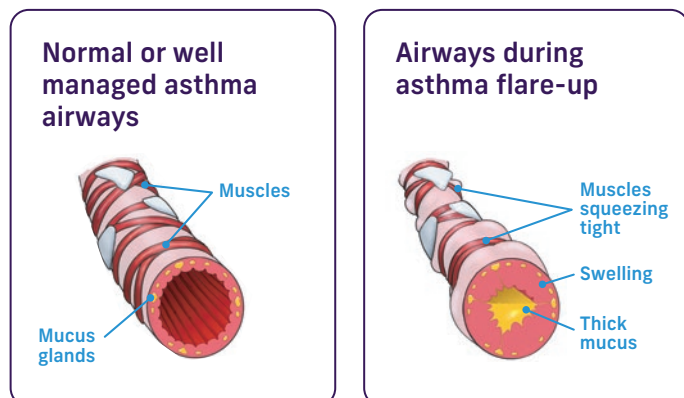
- The person smoking the cigarettes
- Family members, children, partners and people around you
- Unborn children

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:

- Difficulty breathing
- 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 AND YOU SMOKE?

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

- Increasing asthma symptoms (feel worse, more often)
- Increasing asthma flare-ups (more severe, more often)
- Making it harder to obtain good asthma control
- Reducing the effect of most preventer medications, sometimes meaning higher doses are needed to receive the same asthma benefits as non-smokers

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



HOW DOES PASSIVE SMOKING (EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND SMOKE) AFFECT YOU OR YOUR CHILD?

Passive smoking occurs when non-smokers breathe in the harmful side-stream smoke of others. There is no safe level of passive smoking.

If people smoke around you, it may affect your airways and lungs. If you smoke around children, it can be particularly harmful and increase their risk of having health problems such as:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
- Developing asthma or asthma symptoms
- Having asthma flare-ups
- Contracting respiratory infections
- Having reduced lung function

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



THINK ABOUT QUITTING AND GIVE IT A GO!

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 the lungs and airways are 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. Many inhaled substances can 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

In terms of your asthma, quitting smoking can:

- Reduce your asthma symptoms
- Reduce how much medication you need
- Reduce inflammation in your airways
- Improve your lung function

Overall, this can 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.

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 Islander peoples.



How to quit smoking

cancer.org.au/cancer-information/causes-and-prevention/smoking/quit-smoking

Help someone quit smoking

health.gov.au/health-topics/smoking-and-tobacco/how-to-quit-smoking/helping-someone-quit

My QuitBuddy

A downloadable app for smart phones.

health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/my-quitbuddy-app



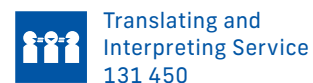
This resource has been developed for the community by Asthma Australia.

It provides basic facts about:

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

Other Asthma Australia resources:

- Asthma Basic Facts
- Asthma Medications and Devices
- Things to Ask and Tell Your Doctor
- Asthma and Pregnancy
- Asthma and Under 5s



All Asthma Australia information is consistent with the National Asthma Council's, The Australian Asthma Handbook (version 2.1, 2020).

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

©Asthma Australia 2022.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Australia License.



ASTHMA ASSIST

Register with Asthma Assist to receive free asthma information.

Visit asthma.org.au/asthmaassist or call **1800 ASTHMA (1800 278 462)**

Statistics sourced from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Updated 25 Aug 2020. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/chronic-respiratory-conditions/copd/contents/copd>

ASTHMA FIRST AID

Blue/Grey Reliever

Airomir, Asmol, Ventolin or Zempreon and Bricanyl

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



DIAL TRIPLE ZERO (000) FOR AN AMBULANCE IMMEDIATELY IF THE PERSON:

- is not breathing
- suddenly becomes worse or is not improving
- is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- is unsure if it is asthma
- **has a known allergy to food, insects or medication and has SUDDEN BREATHING DIFFICULTY, GIVE ADRENALINE AUTOINJECTOR FIRST (if available), even if there are no skin changes, then use a reliever**

1



SIT THE PERSON UPRIGHT

- Be **calm** and reassuring
- **Do not leave** them alone

2



GIVE 4 SEPARATE PUFFS OF RELIEVER PUFFER

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



If using **Bricanyl**, give 2 separate inhalations (5 years or older)

If you don't have a spacer handy in an emergency, 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 breathing does not return to normal, give **4 more separate puffs** of reliever as above



Bricanyl: Give 1 more inhalation

IF BREATHING DOES NOT RETURN TO NORMAL

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



Bricanyl: Give 1 more inhalation **every 4 minutes** until emergency assistance arrives