Lung health

Some people have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema—often associated with smoking or exposure to cigarette smoke. Approximately 7.5% of Australians over the age of 40 have COPD (about 1 in 13 people).

To find out more about COPD contact:
Lung Foundation Australia
1800 654 301
lungfoundation.com.au

It is common for people with COPD to also have asthma. It is important to talk to your doctor about managing these conditions to enable you to continue to enjoy a wide range of activities.

Vaccination recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccination type</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual influenza</td>
<td>For people with severe asthma and COPD</td>
<td>All ages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All seniors</td>
<td>65+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</td>
<td>15+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumococcal (protects against common causes of pneumonia)</td>
<td>Indigenous people</td>
<td>50+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All seniors</td>
<td>65+</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Further information: immunise.health.gov.au - for the latest Immunise Australia Program Information

It is important to know what to do if your asthma symptoms worsen.

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
   — Remember: Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths
   — Give 2 separate doses of a Bricanyl inhaler (age 6 & over) or a Symbicort inhaler (over 12)

3. Wait 4 minutes
   — If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above
   — Give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort inhaler

4. If there is still no improvement call emergency assistance Dial Triple Zero
   — Say ‘ambulance’ and that someone is having an asthma attack
   — Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives
   — Give 1 dose of a Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes - up to 3 more doses of Symbicort

Call emergency assistance immediately - Dial Triple Zero (000)
— If the person is not breathing
— If the person's asthma suddenly becomes worse or is not improving
— If the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
— If you are not sure if it’s asthma
— If 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
Feeling short of breath?
Feeling breathless is not a normal part of getting older.
Approximately one in ten Australian adults has asthma. Asthma can develop for the first time at any age. On average, in Australia, one person dies of asthma every day. Over 90% of these deaths occur in people aged over 45.
The good news is most people can achieve good control of asthma symptoms and live well with asthma.

Could it be asthma?
Do you ever:
— Get breathless or wheezy?
— Wake up coughing or wheezing?
— Struggle to keep up with your normal activity?
If you have any of these symptoms, it is important to speak to your doctor. Tell your doctor what symptoms you have, how often you have them and if they stop you doing the things you enjoy. Ask about a lung health check.

What is asthma?
Asthma is a long-term lung condition that can be controlled, but cannot currently be cured. People with asthma have sensitive, inflamed airways that are more likely to react to triggers. People with asthma often find that certain things can trigger their asthma symptoms – these are known as triggers. When a person’s asthma is well-controlled, triggers are less likely to set off an asthma flare-up. A written asthma action plan can support you to keep your asthma under good control. Some common asthma triggers include:

**Smoking** - Being a smoker or breathing in other people’s smoke makes asthma harder to control and increases the risk of flare-ups. Cigarette smoke can also stop preventer medication working fully.

**Colds and flu** - Viruses, like colds and flu, are the most common triggers for people with asthma. Speak to your doctor about vaccinations (e.g. influenza) and how they can be part of your plan to keep well. If you experience asthma symptoms with a cold or flu, follow your written asthma action plan and see your doctor.

**Exercise and activity** - Exercise can be an asthma trigger. Having good control of asthma symptoms allows people to live active healthy lives. Speak to your doctor if you experience asthma symptoms when carrying out your usual activities, including exercise as this is an indication your asthma may not be well-controlled.

**Meds -** Certain medications can trigger asthma in some people. These can include prescription and non-prescription medications and complementary therapies. Some medications that can trigger asthma.

**Type of medication**

- Beta blockers
  - For most people with asthma, beta blockers (used for high blood pressure and angina, or eye drops for glaucoma) will make their asthma worse.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAIDs)
  - For some people with asthma aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine may make their asthma worse.

Understanding your level of asthma symptom control
Think about your asthma over the last 4 weeks and look at the chart below to see if your asthma control is good, partial or poor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom control</th>
<th>All of:</th>
<th>Partial control</th>
<th>Poor control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to do all your usual activities</td>
<td>Less able to do your usual activities</td>
<td>Less able to do your usual activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No asthma symptoms during night or on waking</td>
<td>Any asthma symptoms during night or on waking</td>
<td>Any asthma symptoms during night or on waking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daytime symptoms no more than 2 days per week</td>
<td>Daytime symptoms more than 2 days per week</td>
<td>Daytime symptoms more than 2 days per week</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need reliever no more than 2 days per week*</td>
<td>Need reliever more than 2 days per week*</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

*Not including reliever puffer taken before exercise.

Written asthma action plans
It is important to have an up to date written asthma action plan. It will cover what medications you need to take for your asthma, and what to do if asthma symptoms worsen. Work together with your doctor to develop your personalised written asthma action plan.

Regular review
Plan to see your doctor at least twice a year to discuss your asthma. If you are using your blue/grey reliever puffer more than two days per week, see your doctor as soon as possible.

Medications and devices
Up to 90% of people do not use their asthma medication devices correctly.

Using your asthma medication properly will help you breathe better!

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to:
— show you how to use your asthma inhalers and devices
— check that you are able to do it correctly with regular reviews.

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**Triggers**

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