

FACT SHEET

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the airways. The main goal for people living with asthma is control. Patients should work with a healthcare provider to create an asthma action plan. This plan will show you what medications you need to take, how to take them, and when to take them. Properly managing your asthma can reduce the number and severity of your asthma attacks. Left untreated, asthma can cause long term lung damage, frequent visits to the emergency room, and hospitalizations.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic condition that causes the airways to become inflamed and narrow. Symptoms of an asthma attack include coughing, periods of wheezing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. More than 25 million people in the U.S. have asthma, and nearly 6 million of them are children. African Americans and Hispanics are at higher risk of asthma than people of other races or ethnicities. African American and Hispanic children are also more likely to die from asthma-related causes.



Common Asthma Triggers

Asthma symptoms can vary from person to person. The severity of symptoms can change over time. Some triggers that can worsen these symptoms include.

- Pollen
- Tobacco smoke
- Dust
- Mold
- Pet dander (animal skin or hair)
- Air pollution
- Perfumes or colognes
- Respiratory Illness such as the cold or flu

Uncontrolled Asthma Can Lead to:

- Shortness of breath
- Long term damage to the lungs and airway
- Increased use of quick relief medications
- Increased hospital stays and emergency room visits
- Decreased productivity, missed work or school days

Asthma Treatment Options

There are two main types of FDA-approved drugs used to treat asthma, quick relief medications and medications intended for long-term control. Talk to your doctor about which medications are right for you.

- **Quick relief medications** - these medications work fast to treat sudden symptoms at the onset of an asthma attack or flare up. They are inhaled to help relax the muscles of your airways (bronchi) and provide quick relief of symptoms during an asthma attack.
- **Long-term control medications** - these medications are used on a regular basis to reduce the inflammation and constriction of the airways that cause asthma symptoms. They can be taken orally, injected or inhaled.

Asthma and Clinical Trials

Talk to your doctor if you think participating in a clinical trial may be right for you. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.ClinicalTrials.gov.

For more information on clinical trials participation go to www.hhs.gov/about-research-participation.

For more information on minority health go to www.fda.gov/minorityhealth.

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