

### > What is asthma?

Asthma is a long term condition that affects the airways in the lungs. Airways are tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. People with asthma have inflamed (swollen) and sensitive airways that become narrow and clogged with sticky mucus in response to certain triggers.

### > What are the causes?

Although the cause of asthma is unknown, there are a number of things that can increase your chance of developing it. These include:

- A family history of asthma or related allergic conditions known as atopic conditions such as eczema, food allergy or hay fever
- Smoking or if you had exposure to tobacco smoke as a child
- Exercise - (exercise-induced asthma)
- Being born prematurely or with a low birth weight

Asthma symptoms can also occur in response to triggers such as:

- Allergens - house dust mites, animal fur and pollens
- Airborne irritants such as cigarette smoke, strong smell and gases
- Medicines – particularly painkillers such as Ibuprofen, aspirin and beta-blockers such as atenolol (used for high blood pressure)
- Weather conditions including sudden changes in temperature, cold air, windy days and hot humid days
- Chest infections

### > What are the symptoms?

Classic symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath
- Tightness in the chest
- Coughing and wheezing

### > What about treatment?

The goal of treatment is for people to be free from symptoms and be able to lead a normal, active life. Asthma medication is taken using different inhalers. An inhaler is a device that delivers the drug directly to your airways. Take your medication as directed by the prescriber. Do not stop taking your medication unless your doctor tells you to.

#### Self Care Tips

- Know your triggers and avoid them if possible
- Use your reliever inhalers when needed to quickly relieve asthma symptoms
- Use your preventer inhalers regularly every day to reduce the inflammation in the airways
- Make sure you know how to use the inhaler properly. Speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any concerns or you are having difficulties using your inhaler
- Make sure you draw up a personal action plan with your doctor or asthma nurse. This will include information about your medicines, how to monitor your condition and what to do if you have an asthma attack

#### References

NHS Condition: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/>

British Lung Foundation <https://www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you>

*Last reviewed November 2020*

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0300 3309 039** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07985 433045** Email [enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk) [www.bromleywell.org.uk](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk)



[@BromleyWellService](https://www.facebook.com/BromleyWellService)



[@BromleyWell](https://twitter.com/BromleyWell)

## &gt; Further resources and services

**Asthma UK**

Helpline 0300 222 5800

[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing advice on triggers, inhalers and medication and how to manage your condition. Also has details of the latest research, an online survey you can take part in and a newsletter.

**British Lung Foundation**

Helpline : 0300 0030 555

<http://www.blf.org.uk/>

A national charity providing information and advice about living with a lung condition. A really useful website packed with information and advice on everything from quitting smoking to coping in cold weather.

NHS Conditions

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of asthma and advice for people living with the condition.

NHS Approved Apps

Links to NHS approved Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle changes and managing stress.

**Breathe Easy Bromley**

Victor Childs Room, St Pauls Church, Crofton Rd, Orpington, BR6

3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of every month from 2pm – 4pm

Tel: 0300 303 0253

Local Support for people living with a lung condition.

Last reviewed November 2020

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0300 3309 039** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07985 433045** Email [enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk) [www.bromleywell.org.uk](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk)



@BromleyWellService



@BromleyWell