



ASTHMA

Bromley**Well****HEALTH FACT SHEET**

Updated July 2024

What is asthma?

Asthma is a long term condition that affects the airways (bronchial tubes) in the 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 symptoms?

Symptoms include:

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

What are the causes?

There are a number of things that increase the risk of asthma. 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 weight

SELF CARE TIPS

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

Asthma attacks do not always need triggers as they can come from increased inflammation. However, if you are noticing more symptoms of asthma identifying a trigger can reduce the impact.

Some triggers include:

- Airborne irritants – mold, cigarette smoke
- Changes in weather – temperature, humidity, wind
- Allergens – pets, dust mites
- Some drugs – ibuprofen, aspirin, beta blockers, alcohol
- Respiratory infections

To register with Bromley Well:
Freephone 0808 278 7898
Or register online:
www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct
07985 431484 / 07985 444210
or email
enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



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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.

Another way to treat your asthma is to look at reducing the risk of infection, chest infections, flus and colds can really exacerbate asthma symptoms. Therefore, make sure to have relevant seasonal vaccinations such as flu jabs. These are often free to those with asthma.



Some myths:

Myth 1: You only need to take your medication when you are having an asthma attack

No, even if there are no obvious signs of inflammation it is still essential to take medication as directed. Some people have their asthma medication prescribed daily and some do not. However, you can still take this medication as a preventative measure. For example, you could use your inhaler prior to exercising or before cleaning the house if you are triggered by dust/dust mites.

SELF CARE TIPS

CONTINUE TO BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

As long as your doctor is happy for you to do so physical activity this can be helpful to your health. Make sure you always warm up beforehand.

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO USE YOUR INHALER PROPERLY

Use your preventer inhalers regularly every day to reduce the inflammation in the airways and your reliever inhalers when you are having an attack. Make sure to speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any concerns or have difficulties using your inhaler.

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Myth 2: People with asthma should not exercise

This is untrue; while exercise can be a trigger for asthma attacks, this does not mean you should avoid it altogether. Physical activity can improve lung function and general health. If your doctor is happy for you to exercise make sure you warm up prior to activity and have a quick relief inhaler to hand, if prescribed.

Myth 3: Asthma treatments reduce in efficacy over time

Not true, the medications used to treat asthma have been shown to be continually effective in long term use. It is still important to note any worsening symptoms, such as using your inhaler more frequently. This could be due to exposure to one of your triggers that may not be visible, such as allergens. It could also mean that your asthma has worsened. Therefore, recognising changes in your symptoms and discussing this with your doctor is essential.

Myth 4: Asthma attacks always require a trigger

No, asthma attacks do not always require a trigger. Although it is important to know your triggers, you should also be aware that your symptoms could indicate worsening inflammation. If you do recognise changes, you should discuss this with your doctors, especially if all of your known triggers have been managed or eliminated.

References: NHS Condition:

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

SELF CARE TIPS**DRAW UP A PERSONAL ACTION PLAN**

Discuss a plan with your doctor or asthma nurse. Your plan should include information about your medicines, how to monitor your condition and what to do if you have an asthma attack.

PRACTICE BREATHING EXERCISES

Alongside exercise practicing different types of breathing can help with your lung health. You can start by trying diaphragmatic breathing. Lie on your back, put one hand on your chest and one on your stomach, slowly inhale and exhale, try to keep your chest still and only have your stomach rise and fall.

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FURTHER RESOURCES

Asthma + Lung UK

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/>

Helpline 0300 222 5800

Email:

helpline@asthmaandlung.org.uk

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals around Asthma and other lung conditions. Contains advice on triggers, inhalers and medication and how to manage your condition. Was created in 2020 when Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation combined.

NHS Conditions

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

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

NHS Wellbeing App

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/wellbeing-apps/>

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

Bromley Asthma + Lung UK Support Group

<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/help/support-network/bromley-asthma-lung-uk-support-group>

Tel: 0300 303 0253

Local Support for people living with a lung condition.

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