

What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs of children and adults. Asthma causes the airways in the lungs to swell and mucus to build up inside the air tubes for a short time. The airways get smaller or narrow which makes breathing harder. The narrow airways cause wheezing or a whistling sound in the chest when breathing. Asthma also causes difficulty breathing, chest tightness, and nighttime or early morning coughing.

How do you get asthma?

In most cases, we don't know what causes asthma. You are more likely to get asthma if you have family members with asthma and allergies. Even people without a family history of asthma get the disease. There are many things in the environment that can trigger an asthma attack.

What should I do if I have a family history of asthma?

Tell your doctor about your family history of asthma. The doctor will probably want to examine you or your children. Your doctor may ask questions and do some breathing tests to see if you or your children have asthma. If you and your children don't have asthma now, the doctor can tell

you how to delay or prevent asthma symptoms.

What things cause or trigger an asthma attack?

Sudden wheezing and problems breathing, called an asthma attack, can be caused by:

- ◆ Smoking cigarettes, cigars, or a pipe
- ◆ Second hand smoke
- ◆ Dust mites and cockroaches
- ◆ Air pollution, fumes, or a sudden change in temperature
- ◆ Pollen, mold, foods, or pet dander
- ◆ A cold or the flu
- ◆ Too much activity, especially if the air is cold and dry



