

Benefits of Exercise

Taking regular exercise and playing sports improves overall fitness and well being. People with asthma should be encouraged to participate in regular exercise, being fit helps the body to cope better with all conditions.

Exercise is beneficial to both physical health and emotional well-being. Even if you are not trying to win an Olympic medal, almost all people with EIA should be able to exercise to their full ability with appropriate diagnosis and treatment. One of the dangers in an asthma attack is fatigue, which may make you weaken in your fight to breathe. Obviously it is good to have strong breathing muscles, because strong muscles get tired less easily. The way to get strong breathing muscles is to exercise. People with asthma should exercise as much as they can at a pace that is good for them.



Helpful Tips

Use the medications your doctor has prescribed correctly. Some medications are to be taken before exercising. (This will help ease asthma exacerbations, and lasts between 4 and 6 hours) If children have EIA and need to use asthma medication before exercising then their parents should let teachers and coaches know.

- Your asthma must be well controlled before you begin to exercise or play a sport
- Work up to your sport gradually
- Warm-up for 6-10 minutes before beginning a full exercise program and cool down at the end of your exercise
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Stop exercising if symptoms arise
- Avoid the cold air

ASTHMA AND EXERCISE



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Important Facts:

- Exercise or physical activity can make asthma worse; for some it may be the only cause of asthma symptoms. However, exercise is important for everyone and should not be avoided.
- Exercise is a common trigger for asthma.
- Research indicates that about 80-90% of people with asthma have symptoms triggered by exercise.
- In teenagers and young adults, exercise may be the most common asthma trigger.
- With the right medication, watching of symptoms, and managing your asthma correctly, you or your child may still be able to enjoy the benefits of exercise.

Exercise Induced Asthma (EIA)

- EIA is an uncomfortable reaction to vigorous exercise.
- EIA can affect anybody with asthma - children, adults; recreational sports people, or even professional athletes.

Why does exercise trigger asthma?

When people exercise they breathe faster and this makes it much more difficult for the nose and upper airways to warm and add moisture to the air breathed in. This results in the air breathed in during exercise being drier and colder than usual. It is thought that this cold, dry

air in the airways triggers the symptoms of exercise induced asthma. This may explain why swimming is a good sport for those with exercise induced asthma. The humid air in the swimming pool does not act as such a strong trigger. Snow skiing or ice hockey are not thought to be good choices for people with EIA.

Symptoms of EIA:

- Coughing
one of the most common symptoms felt
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Difficulty in breathing

Symptoms usually begin 3-8 minutes after exercise begins and worsen about 5-10 minutes after exercise stops. Symptoms usually go away after about 20-30 minutes and can be anything from mild to severe.

You should also be aware of other triggers when you exercise, for example a high pollen count, low or high temperature and/or existing cold or viral infections like the flu. These may affect the choice of exercise.

Diagnosing EIA

If you feel that exercise triggers symptoms of asthma in you or your child then it is important that you tell your doctor. The doctor will want to find out whether you have:

- Asthma for which exercise is one of the triggers
- Symptoms of asthma that only occur when you exercise
- The doctor may use the following methods to help diagnose exercise induced asthma:
 - Medical history

- Peak flow tests
- Pulmonary function tests- these are simple to perform and are often used in children aged 5 and above
- Other tests- these tests are used if the diagnosis is difficult to make or if symptoms have a large impact on life

A doctor will help create a personalized management plan for you or your child with guidelines to follow to allow you to exercise without discomfort.



Recommended Exercises

- Sports continuous in nature without short breaks that are undertaken outside in the cold air, such as cross country running, are all strong trigger factors for EIA.
- Team sports such as football, baseball or volleyball are less likely to cause asthma symptoms than running. These sports are played in brief bursts with short breaks in between.
- Swimming is an excellent form of exercise. The warm humid air in the swimming pool is less likely to trigger symptoms of asthma.
- Yoga is also a good type of exercise because it helps relax the body and improves breathing.
- Other activities include walking, biking, hiking, or golf.
- Talk to your doctor before starting an exercise plan and always pace yourself.