



## **9 Bronchial Asthma**



## On Bronchial Asthma

Bronchial asthma is an episodic attack of wheezing and labored breathing when one is exposed to certain allergens. Asthma attacks may occur several times a year. Common symptoms of asthma attacks are :

- ① Inflammation and swelling in the bronchi
- ② Constriction of the muscles in the chest and narrowing of the bronchi.
- ③ Excessive secretion of mucous.

As a result, the flow of air is restricted which makes breathing a struggle. As air passes through the narrowed bronchial tubes, a flute-like wheezing sound is produced when exhaling. There are three typical types of asthma attacks :

**Mild attack** . . . . There is a slight wheezing sound and some shortness of breath, but the child can still play and eat meals normally.

**Moderate attack** . . . . The pit of the stomach sinks in deeply from severe breathlessness, there is a loud wheezing sound, difficulty with normal daily activities, inability to say more than a few words between breaths, and awakening at night because of these symptoms.

**Severe attack** . . . . Gasping for breath, restlessness, and a bluish discoloration of lips and fingernails (cyanosis).

Children with asthma have an inborn predisposition to allergies, reacting when exposed to environmental conditions, food, cold infections, change of climate, exhaustion, uneasiness, stress, etc.

**There are three important factors in managing bronchial asthma :**

- ① Getting the right medication.
- ② Eliminating or avoiding the substance that triggers the attack
- ③ Conditioning the mind & body to cope with asthma



## Treating Asthma Attacks at Home

### ① Place the child in a comfortable breathing position.

Lying down can make breathing difficult. Breathing becomes easier when the child is sitting upright, leaning slightly forward on a table, or resting against extra pillows or cushions that have been used to raise the body to an upright position. It is best to carry the baby in one's arm with the head raised.

### ② Give enough fluids.

Increasing fluid intake helps to thin out mucous making it less sticky and easier to cough out.

### ③ Slow deep abdominal breathing

Deep breathing can expel mucous.

For infants, gently pat the back several times to expel mucous.

**Abdominal Breathing** : This is a method of breathing air from the diaphragm. A normal healthy person breathes by using the chest muscles and the diaphragm. During asthma attacks, chest muscles tighten making breathing impossible. However, with proper abdominal breathing, asthma attacks can be more bearable.

### ④ Remain calm and quiet

Staying relaxed will make breathing easier.

### ⑤ With prolonged asthma attacks, use medication as directed by your doctor.

■ In most cases, asthma attacks can be managed at home by following the procedure stated above. ■  
■ If, however, the asthma attack persists, go to the hospital and seek immediate medical treatment. ■



# Asthma Medication

A number of medications are available for the treatment of bronchial asthma. Medicines for asthma are divided into two groups: medications that provide short-term relief and medications for long-term symptom control.

## 1. Short-term relief during asthma attacks

### ① Bronchodilators

These are drugs that help relax the muscles, thin the mucous and ease breathing. There are two types of bronchodilators, each with its own specific action. The two types can be combined when necessary. This has proven to give more effective results.

Beta 2 antagonists : These are normally cold medicines but are very effective in treating mild asthma attacks. Aside from the oral medicines, inhalers and tapes are also available.

Theophylline drugs : Theo-Dur® or Theolong®, etc.

For prolonged breathing problems and wheezing sounds, these drugs when combined with beta 2 antagonists may give very effective results in treating asthma attacks. Oral medicines and suppositories are also available.

### ② Corticosteroids (Hormonal medication)

These are used for severe attacks. They are very powerful drugs but can cause significant side effects when taken for long periods of time.

Inhaled steroids are most often used as preventive treatment of asthma because these have a lesser risk of side effects.

## 2. Attack Controller Medications

### ① Anti-Allergy Drugs

These drugs act to prevent or treat the bronchi inflammation and minimize the occurrence of asthma attacks. These are very effective as preventive measures, but may not have any effect on treating an attack once it occurs.

Inhalers : Intal®

Oral Medicines : Zajtiden®, Lizaben®, Aceptin®, Onone®, etc.

It is important that these medicines be taken for a period of time-from 1-6 months-for them to have any effect in either controlling or reducing the severity of the asthma attack once it occurs.

### ② Herbal Medicines

There are herbal medicines available that have very effective results in treating asthma.

## Environmental Control of Asthma

① Maintain a normal lifestyle. Early to bed, early to rise.

② Don't keep pets in the house (cats, dogs, birds, and so on).

③ Stop smoking

④ Control indoor molds

Make sure to clean air conditioners and heaters to avoid problems with indoor molds.

⑤ Limit exposure to house dust (mites)

House dust (mites) are believed to be the most common allergen that triggers asthma.

- Clean everything thoroughly and frequently

- Use a vacuum cleaner to remove dust. Take extra care as vacuuming can spread house dust all over the room.
- Wipe dust that accumulates on furniture and bookshelves frequently.
- Make sure to free stuffed dolls and cushions from dust.
- Wash curtains from time to time.
- Dry beddings under the sun. Do not beat. Instead, use a vacuum cleaner to remove mites that have collected on the futons.
- Clean air conditioners. Wash or change filters frequently.

- Remove floor carpets and mattresses and have wood flooring instead.

- Cover upholstered furniture. Leather-covered or synthetic sofas are recommended.

- Keep rooms dry and well ventilated.

- Avoid using oil or gas stove heaters as they may pollute the room. Use electric heaters.

- Sleep on a bed instead of feather quilt futons and beddings.



## Conditioning the Mind & Body to Cope with Asthma

In coping with asthma, it is important to not lose hope. Continued regular conditioning is necessary to be physically and emotionally strong.

### ① Sunbathing

Sunbathe for 10 minutes and gradually prolong the time.

### ② Light clothing

Always wear light clothing.

### ③ Towel Rub-down • Cold Water Rub-Down

Massage the body with a cold towel starting from the center extending to the hands and legs then back for about two to three minutes or until the skin becomes reddish. Discontinue if rashes appear.

### ④ Cold shower

After a hot bath, pour lukewarm water over the body before taking another dip into the hot bathtub. Repeat this procedure 3 times.

### ⑤ Abdominal breathing techniques

Train abdominal muscles by doing some breathing exercises. These exercises help a lot in easing asthma attacks.

### ⑥ Sports

Any kind of sport is beneficial to everyone. Swimming is an ideal sport for people with asthma. It helps reduce asthma attacks and is a good exercise for the lungs.

### ⑦ Breathe cool air

Take 10-20 deep breaths early in the morning when the air is still fresh and cool.

