

# Asthma and Smoking

## What is Asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the lungs. It is the most common chronic disease of childhood and is also very common among adults. Sometimes you feel healthy, but other times you have asthma attacks. During an attack, airways in your lungs swell and get more narrow, making it hard to breathe. Your lungs also get clogged with mucus. Asthma attacks can be mild, moderate, or serious—and even life threatening.

## Symptoms of an asthma attack include:

- Coughing
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Wheezing
- Tightness or pain in the chest

## How Does Smoking Affect Asthma?

There are thousands of chemicals in tobacco smoke, many of which are toxic and can cause cancer. You breathe in these chemicals when you smoke. When you're around someone else who is smoking, all the smoke that you breathe in is called "secondhand smoke."

Lots of things can trigger asthma attacks. These triggers are different for everyone, but one of the most common causes of asthma attacks is tobacco smoke. Tobacco smoke can cause asthma attacks because it irritates the airways in your lungs.

There is no cure for asthma, but it can be controlled. Smoking, or being around someone else who is smoking, makes asthma much harder to control.

For some people, asthma attacks are so severe that they can lead to hospitalization or even death.

The most important thing a person with asthma can do is to stop smoking.

## When You Stop Smoking

- You will be much less likely to have asthma attacks
- You will help people who live with you – such as your children – suffer fewer attacks
- Your asthma will be easier to control and you may need less medication
- You will be less likely to need hospitalization or to die from a serious asthma attack
- With fewer attacks, you'll feel better in many other ways

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