



School Nurse Report

Asthma

What is Asthma?

Asthma is an incurable condition that affects the airways in the lungs of 1 in 9 Australians (2.5 million Australians).

When they are exposed to certain "triggers" it can cause an asthma attack. This results in:

- The muscles around the airway squeeze tightly
- The airways swell up and become narrow
- More mucus is produced.

When this occurs it becomes very difficult to breath.

Although Asthma cannot be cured it can be well controlled with the help of a health professional.

Symptoms of Asthma

Symptoms will vary from person to person depending on situations and external factors. Most common symptoms: breathlessness, wheezing, feeling tight around the chest and a continual cough.

Well controlled asthma will only have occasional symptoms, but if more regularly then it is advised that you see a doctor.

Causes

People with asthma often have a family history or asthma, eczema and hayfever but causes are not fully understood. Recent research has shown that being exposed to tobacco smoke as a baby or child and obesity can increase the risk of developing asthma.

The rate of asthma among Indigenous Australians is almost twice as high as those compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

Triggers

A trigger is something that sets off an asthmatic response by your body. Triggers are different from person to person and can include;

- Change of season
- Exercise
- Catching a cold or a flu
- Cold air, humidity smoke
- Certain foods, additive in foods or certain medications
- Stress

It is important to have a written Asthma Action Plan if you have Asthma. This plan will help ensure that the people around you will know what to do if you do have an asthma attack.

If you are having symptoms more than 3 times a week it is recommended that you see your GP for a review of your current asthma medications. They may recommend that you use preventer medication.

- Preventer medications make the airways less sensitive, reduce redness and swelling and help to dry up mucus. Preventers need to be taken every day to reduce symptoms and asthma attacks, and it may take a few weeks before they reach their



full effect. Your doctor will adjust your preventer medication to the lowest dose you need to keep your asthma well-controlled. Preventer medications are currently the drugs most likely to significantly improve your symptoms.

For further information contact your GP or visit your School Based Youth Health Nurse

Useful Websites include;

- www.asthmaaustralia.org.au
- <https://livewire.org.au/>

Or you can join the young persons asthma Facebook page, details on Asthmas Australia website.

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