

EXERCISING WITH ASTHMA



While exercise may be an asthma trigger for some people, research indicates that it is possible to build up tolerance to physical activity over time, making an attack less likely. In addition to reducing the risk of developing many other diseases, appropriate exercise can help individuals with asthma maintain a healthy body weight, boost immunity, reduce stress, sleep better and feel more energized. The key is to keep one's asthma under control through proper treatment and precautions.

Getting Started

- Talk with your health care provider before starting an exercise program and ask for specific programming recommendations and possible changes to your medications.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- Schedule your exercise session at a time when you're least likely to experience an attack, such as mid- to late-morning.
- An extended warm-up and a gradual cool-down may help reduce the likelihood of developing symptoms.
- Realize that it might take up to six weeks to get used to your routine and figure out what works best for you.
- Be prepared to adjust your workouts according to changes in weather and fluctuations in your symptoms.
- Start slowly and gradually progress the intensity and duration of your workouts.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed.

Exercise Cautions

- Avoid extremes in temperature and humidity.
- Walking and jogging, particularly in warm, dry climates, may produce more asthma symptoms. The same is true for cold-weather, high-intensity activities.
- If exercise aggravates your symptoms, immediately stop all activity and contact your health care provider as you may need more intensive medical management for your asthma.
- Limit your activity on days when pollen counts are high.
- Do not be concerned if you are unable to reach the higher end of your target heart-rate range—you will still experience significant benefits from physical activity.

Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

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