

The Lung Association's

Asthma Action™ Facts

*Can people
with asthma
exercise?*

YES! Many famous Olympic athletes with asthma not only exercise at a high level but go on to win medals! Donovan Bailey and Sharon Donnelly are famous Canadian Olympic athletes with asthma. One of the keys to their success was well controlled asthma.

Do not let Asthma ruin your exercise plans!

For some people, exercise and asthma is not always a good combination. After exercising for a few minutes, they sometimes develop trouble with their asthma, while others experience difficulties with their asthma after they stop exercising. Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest tightness are all discouraging symptoms that may occur in both adults and children. Exercising with a cold or during pollen season may worsen these symptoms because the airways are inflamed. Cold, dry air is one of the most common triggers of asthma during exercise. However, there are ways to control these symptoms - and to start or continue exercising.

How will I know if I have exercise-induced asthma?

It is important to consult your doctor who will talk to you about your history and experience while exercising. The doctor may decide that an exercise challenge test would be helpful. The test, which includes exercise and repeated breathing tests, is done in a hospital or specialized clinic and confirms the presence of exercise-induced asthma.

What can I do if I am told I have exercise-induced asthma?

Warm-up gradually: A continuous, progressive warm-up for 15 minutes before vigorous activity will help decrease symptoms.

Medication: Your doctor may recommend taking Ventolin, Bricanyl, Oxeze or Intal before and/or after you exercise to relieve symptoms. Take the medicine prescribed by your doctor 10-15 minutes before you start exercising. If after a vigorous exercise, you are experiencing asthma symptoms, you may take 2 puffs of your reliever medication.

Asthma Action[™] Facts

Find an exercise that can be performed comfortably and that you enjoy. Exercise such as long distance running can be troublesome for people with asthma, while swimming (as a result of the warm, moist air) tends to be quite enjoyable.

Use caution when exercising during periods of high pollution, cold weather, windy days or high pollen counts. As these conditions may worsen symptoms, either cover up the mouth or, more appropriately, exercise indoors. Don't start exercising when asthma symptoms are present. If you do exercise on cold days, cover up your mouth with a neckwarmer.

2 Remember exercise is important for everyone! It strengthens the heart and body muscles, relieves stress and improves your sense of well being. If you are still experiencing difficulty with exercise, make sure you work closely with your health care provider, who may be able to assist you in achieving your goals.

More questions?

Call the Asthma Action Helpline at 1-800-668-7682, Monday to Friday to speak with a Certified Asthma Educator. Many fact sheets on asthma are available by calling this number.

For more information about asthma and exercise check this website:
www.lung.ca

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