

# bad air day?

We all know someone with asthma.

In fact, about 14-16% of Australian kids have asthma (that means that for every 6 kids you know, one of them will probably have a puffer in their school bag!)

## what are some of the symptoms of asthma?

Shortness of Breath  
Wheezing - noisy breathing  
Dry Cough (often worse at night or after exercise)  
Feeling Tight in the Chest

## what is asthma anyway?

Asthma is a condition which affects a person's airways, (or *bronchial tubes*). These tubes go from your windpipe (or *trachea*) into your lungs.

We don't know exactly what causes asthma, but for these kids, their airways are very sensitive to different triggers. Sometimes their airways will swell up and become narrower, and they might produce more mucous (... eeeuw!) making it hard to breathe.

## how is it treated?

Asthma can't be cured, but it can be managed.

If you have asthma your doctor will probably prescribe you some medication to control your symptoms. You might have a puffer, which is what we call "reliever medication" (such as *Ventolin* or *Bricanyl*), or you might have "preventer medication" that you take every day as a tablet (like *Singulair*), or as an inhaler (such as *Flixotide*, *Pulmicort* or *Intal Forte*, amongst others). If your asthma is stubborn, you may have to take "controller medication" (such as *Foradile*, *Oxis* or *Serevent*). These are not first-aid medications and should be taken all the time with your preventer medication, even when you are well.



*Asthma can't be cured - but it can be controlled with proper management and treatment. Be an active, asthma-smart kid, and you too can get your asthma under control.*

You may also need to avoid things that trigger your asthma symptoms, such as cigarette smoke, or strong perfume. Many kids also feel asthma symptoms when they play sport – but this is the one trigger you should not avoid (sport is way too good for you!)

With the help of a health professional, you and your parents should write out a personalised *Asthma Action Plan*, detailing how you, your family and your friends can manage your asthma.

## how can your physiotherapist help?

Your physiotherapist can help you to learn about and manage your asthma.

If you don't already have one, they can help you to write your *Asthma Action Plan*. They can show you how to use your puffer and spacer in the most effective way and teach you

breathing exercises that can reduce some of the symptoms of asthma. They can recommend and monitor an exercise program especially for you – to keep you fit and help make your lungs as healthy as possible.

Don't forget to tell your physio if you are taking *Prednisone*, or other steroids, among your medication.

## what are some common things that might make your asthma worse?

Catching a Cold  
Pollution  
Dust Mites or Mould  
Cigarette Smoke  
Some Plants or Pet's Hair  
Cold Air (or a sudden change in temperature)  
Some Medications  
Hormonal or Emotional Changes  
Playing Sport or Exercise

# keep on moving!

## Having asthma doesn't mean that you can't play sport. Don't let your asthma stop you from being fit and healthy!

Lots of kids with asthma worry about having an asthma attack when they're playing sport.

But who wants to be stuck on the sidelines watching everyone else have all the fun?!

Don't let your asthma stop you from getting involved and being fit and healthy.

Exercise is the one trigger that should not be avoided. It is too important for your health.

Staying active is good for you in so many ways. It improves your fitness and makes you stronger. It makes you feel good and helps you relax, and it can be a great way to have fun with friends, or make some new ones.

Kids with well managed asthma should be able to participate in almost any sport.

Often, kids find that exercise can even reduce their symptoms.

But, you do need to carefully prepare for sport, and know what to do if you feel symptoms coming on during exercise.

### are you ready? get set ...

Make sure your asthma is well managed.

Speak to your physiotherapist about what exercise is right for you.

If you are playing a team sport - tell your coach that you have asthma.

Use your asthma puffer or reliever medication before you warm-up.

If you're just starting out with an exercise program, try something easy, like walking around the block, or gentle swimming, and slowly build up the time



and the intensity.

Take extra care to always warm up and cool down properly.

Your physiotherapist can show you how.

### jump in ...

Swimming is a great sport for kids with asthma.

It is less likely to trigger asthma symptoms than other activities.

In fact, evidence shows that regular swimming can actually increase the volume of the lungs and help develop good breathing techniques as well as build strong muscles.

Just make sure you go to a swim school that understands asthma management, and give your swimming coach a copy of your **Asthma Action Plan**.

### what about if I start coughing or wheezing during sport?

Stop what you are doing.

Stay calm.

Follow your **Asthma Action Plan**.

If the symptoms don't go away, see your doctor as soon as possible.

When you are feeling better, talk to your physiotherapist about what you can do to prevent it from happening again.

### Talk to Your Physiotherapist:

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