

Asthma Management: Exercise Safety

Exercise is healthy for everyone, even for people with asthma. Having asthma should not prevent you from being active.

But some people find that exercise is a trigger for their asthma. It is dangerous to exercise if your asthma is poorly controlled. Talk to your healthcare provider to learn what types of physical activities are safe for you.

Here are some tips to prevent your symptoms from flaring up when exercising: Do warm-up exercises for about 10 to 15 minutes before beginning your activity, and cool down stretches for 10 to 15 minutes directly after. Breathe through your nose while exercising, rather than through the mouth.

Gentle activities such as walking or golfing are less likely to cause problems than more strenuous ones. Pace yourself. Activities that use short bursts of energy, like bowling or softball, are preferable to ones that require continuous exertion, such as running or soccer.

Consider exercising indoors when it's very hot and humid or very cold and dry; when there is a "heat advisory" or when ozone, pollen, or pollution levels are high. Cover your face with a scarf if you are exercising in cold weather. This helps to warm the air and prevents cold air from triggering your asthma. And avoid exercising when you have a cold or other illness.

Drink plenty of water before and after exercise. Drinking helps to replace water lost through perspiration and helps to prevent you from becoming overheated.

If exercise is a trigger for you, talk to your healthcare provider. They can help you exercise properly with asthma. You may be told to take your rescue medication before you begin your exercise program.

And if you feel symptoms at any time during your activity, stop and take another dose of medication right away.

"Some people who have exercise-induced asthma do very well by using their rescue inhaler 15 minutes before exercise, and that's often enough for them. Some people find they need a stronger treatment, so then they may also need a daily controller medicine on top of their as-needed inhaler and that leads to even better exercise control. So there's really different techniques and different regimens that can be used."

If you have any questions about exercising safely with asthma, talk with your healthcare provider.

Together, you will determine the best way to manage your exercise-related symptoms so you can enjoy an active lifestyle.