

# August's Topic: Asthma Management

By: Samantha Adams, PharmD. Candidate, Jerry Twiggs, PharmD. Candidate, Trey Dailey, PharmD. Candidate



## HEALTHCARE CLINIC HOURS:

Monday-Wednesday, Friday

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Thursday

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Phone: (334) 263-8470

Fax: (334) 263-8670

Email: hcc@alseib.org

## PHARMACY HOURS:

Monday-Wednesday, Friday

7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Thursday

9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

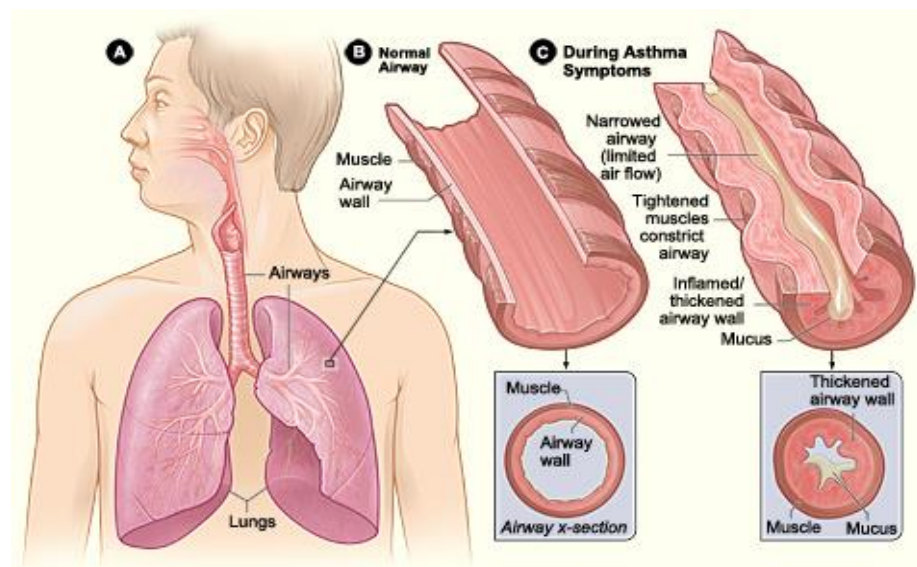
Phone: (334) 263-8460

Fax: (334) 263-8660

Email: rx@alseib.org

## What is asthma?

- Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease that affects the air passages that can cause breathing to become difficult. It is a very common condition that can affect people of all ages, although it starts most of the time during childhood. During normal breathing, air will move in and out of the lungs through air passageways that will transport oxygen throughout the body while carrying out carbon dioxide. When you have asthma, sometime you will inhale certain elements of the air that will bother your lungs, which can lead to the airways swelling and narrowing making it hard to breathe.
- If you have asthma, it is something you will always have, but you won't experience any symptoms unless something you breathe in bothers your lungs. Sometimes asthma symptoms are mild, which will go away or after taking your quick acting inhaler. Other times, your symptoms will become more severe and bothersome which is called a flare-up or exacerbation. It is best to recognize the signs of any asthma flare-up so you can quickly treat it and prevent it from getting worse. By taking the correct medication and identifying triggers, most people are able to keep their asthma under control and live long healthy lives without asthma holding you back.



What is asthma [Internet]. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; [updated 2012 Jun15; cited 2014 Jun 25].

## Signs & Symptoms

- **Asthma – related coughing** is worse at night or early in the morning which makes it difficult to sleep.
- **Wheezing** is a whistling or squeaky sound that occurs when you breathe.
- **Chest tightness** is a sensation that feels like something is squeezing or sitting on your chest.
- **Shortness of breath** in patients with asthma may appear as though you cannot catch your breath, feeling out of breath, or you feel like you cannot get air out of your lungs.

## What Causes Asthma?

- Exact mechanism is unknown; however the following genetic or environmental factors could contribute:
  - **Atopy**, an inherited tendency to develop allergies. (Hypersensitive individuals)
  - **Parents** diagnosed with asthma.
  - Certain **respiratory infections** during childhood.
  - Contact with certain **airborne allergens** or exposures to viral infections in infancy or in early childhood as the immune system is developing.
  - People with an allergic condition, such as **eczema** or **allergic rhinitis** are more likely to develop asthma
  - Having a higher than normal **weight**
  - Patients who **smoke cigarettes** or are exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke
  - Mothers who smoked while pregnant
  - Exposure to **pollutants** in the environment such as exhaust fumes
  - Exposure to **harmful chemicals** in the workplace

## Diagnosing Asthma

- Lung Function Test:
  - Spirometry, a test that measures the following three characteristics:
    - The amount of air your lungs can hold
    - The amount of air you can breathe in and out
    - How fast you can blow air out
  - Bronchoprovocation, a test to measure airway sensitivity during physical activity or after receiving increased doses of cold air, or a special chemical to breathe
- Allergy Test:
  - Determine which allergens specifically affect you
- Chest X-Ray or electrocardiogram (ECG):
  - These tests help to determine if a foreign object is present or if another condition is causing the symptoms
- Other tests to determine if another condition is present that also has similar symptoms to asthma such as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), vocal cord dysfunction, or sleep apnea

## Treating Asthma

Currently, this is no cure for asthma, but with the many treatment options available; your asthma can be controlled. Controlling asthma is the goal of treatment, which consist of preventing symptoms such as, coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. Control of your asthma is possible by partnering with your healthcare providers to determine the best way to treat your asthma.

### LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

#### Asthma Triggers

- Pollens or air pollution
- Animal fur
- Cockroaches
- Cigarette smoke
- Sprays (hairsprays)
- Common colds or sinusitis

If one ore more of these trigger your asthma, try to avoid these to help control symptoms and avoid flare-ups.

### TREATMENT OPTIONS

#### Quick-relief medications

- Ex. Albuterol inhaler. This medication provides quick relief “rescue” when you are experiencing flare-ups or symptoms.

#### Long-term control

- Ex. Inhaled corticosteroids. These medications are taken everyday and help decrease airway inflammation and prevent asthma symptoms.

## References

1. What is asthma [Internet]. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; [updated 2012 Jun15; cited 2014 Jun 25]. Available from: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma/>
2. National Asthma Education and Prevention Expert Panel 3 Report: Guidelines for the diagnosis and management of asthma[Internet]. 2007 October [cited 2014 Jun25]. Available from: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthsumm.pdf>



www.alseib.org

Please let us know how we are doing by filling out a survey at the following link:

[https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SU/?SID=SV\\_3DXRxyUp8KC7Lzn](https://auburn.qualtrics.com/SU/?SID=SV_3DXRxyUp8KC7Lzn)

**CALL FOR AN  
APPOINTMENT  
TODAY!**

**(334) 263-8470**

## State Wellness Center

101 S. Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36104

All active employees covered under the State Employee's Health Insurance Plan (Group 13000) are eligible for a wellness premium discount. Every active employee must be screened each year. HealthWatch Screenings are provided at the State Wellness Center. *Screenings must be completed by October 31 each year. **Don't delay and get caught in the October rush at the end of the deadline period!*** Schedule your screening appointment online or call the Wellness Center today for your free health screening.

SEIB and Local Government employees along with SEIB retirees are able to use the State Wellness Center Pharmacy. The pharmacy offers various over the counter products at discounted prices and a **free medication delivery service**. Delivery can be provided to the patients located in Montgomery. Please designate which site you would like your medication delivered to, and if it is to your residence someone must be available at the home to receive the delivery.

## State Wellness Center Healthcare Clinic

The SEIB clinic has a quality healthcare **TEAM** that includes nurse practitioners, an ambulatory care pharmacist, a physician, and nurses who work closely together to take care of your health and wellness needs.

### Services Include:

- Treat minor illnesses
- Provide health education & monitoring
- Check health progress between appointments
- Share information with your physician
- Monitor efficacy & safety of every medication
- Evaluate out of pocket medication expense
- Smoking cessation & weight loss services
- Diabetes education program
- Immunizations & injectable medications
- Develop a personalized medication plan
- Monitor control of chronic illnesses
- Medication check-ups
- Medication therapy management