

May's Topic: Asthma Management

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HEALTHCARE CLINIC HOURS:

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

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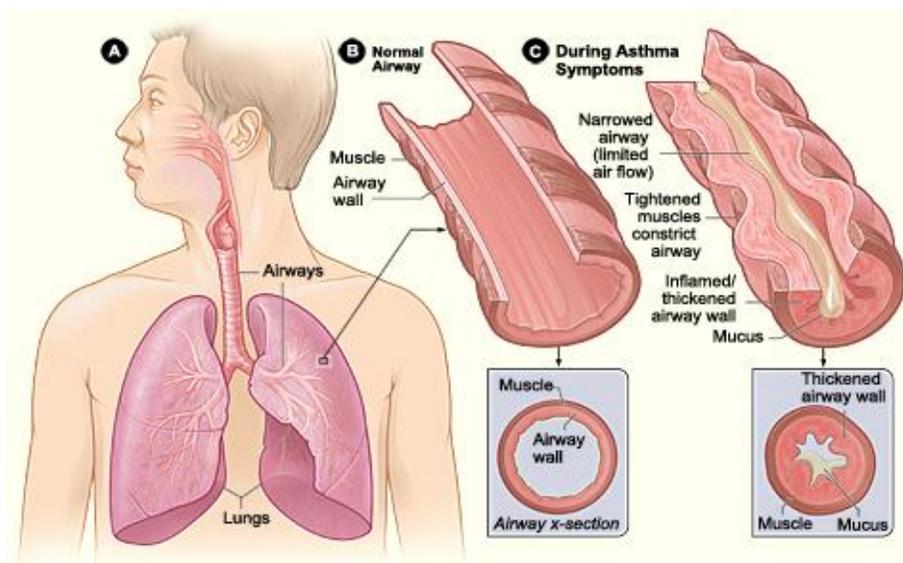
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What is asthma?

- 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.nhlbi.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.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/asthma/asthsumm.pdf>



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Montgomery, AL 36104

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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.

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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.

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- Share information with your physician
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- Diabetes education program
- Immunizations & injectable medications
- Develop a personalized medication plan
- Monitor control of chronic illnesses
- Medication check-ups
- Medication therapy management