

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ASTHMA?©



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advance

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Do you know what it feels like to  
have asthma?



# Asthma patients may have 2 kinds of feelings about their disease:

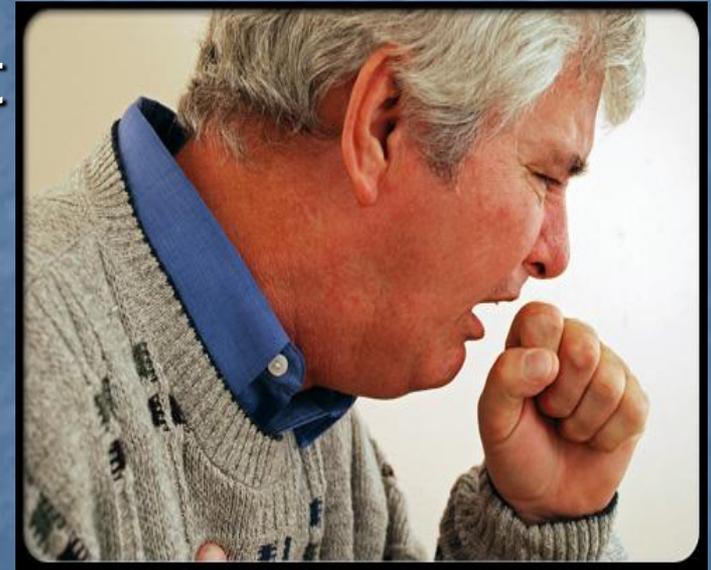
## 1) Emotional feelings

- Scared or afraid
- Sad or unhappy
- Mad or angry
- Out of control
- Embarrassed or ashamed



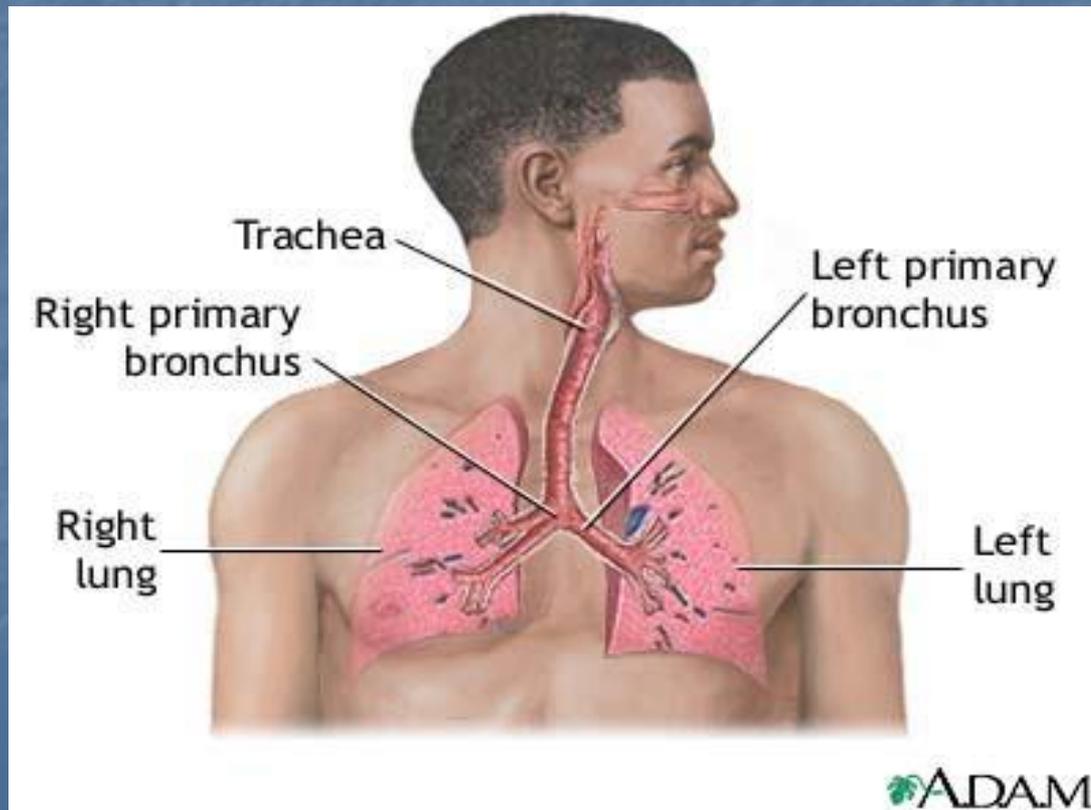
## 2) Physical feelings

- Trouble breathing
- Coughing
- Can't take a deep breath, feeling "squeezed" in the middle
- Wheezing sounds in the chest
- Chest feels "tight"
- Throat is "scratchy"
- Watery eyes
- Feeling dizzy, head hurts
- Feeling tired



# What is asthma?

- Asthma affects the Respiratory System

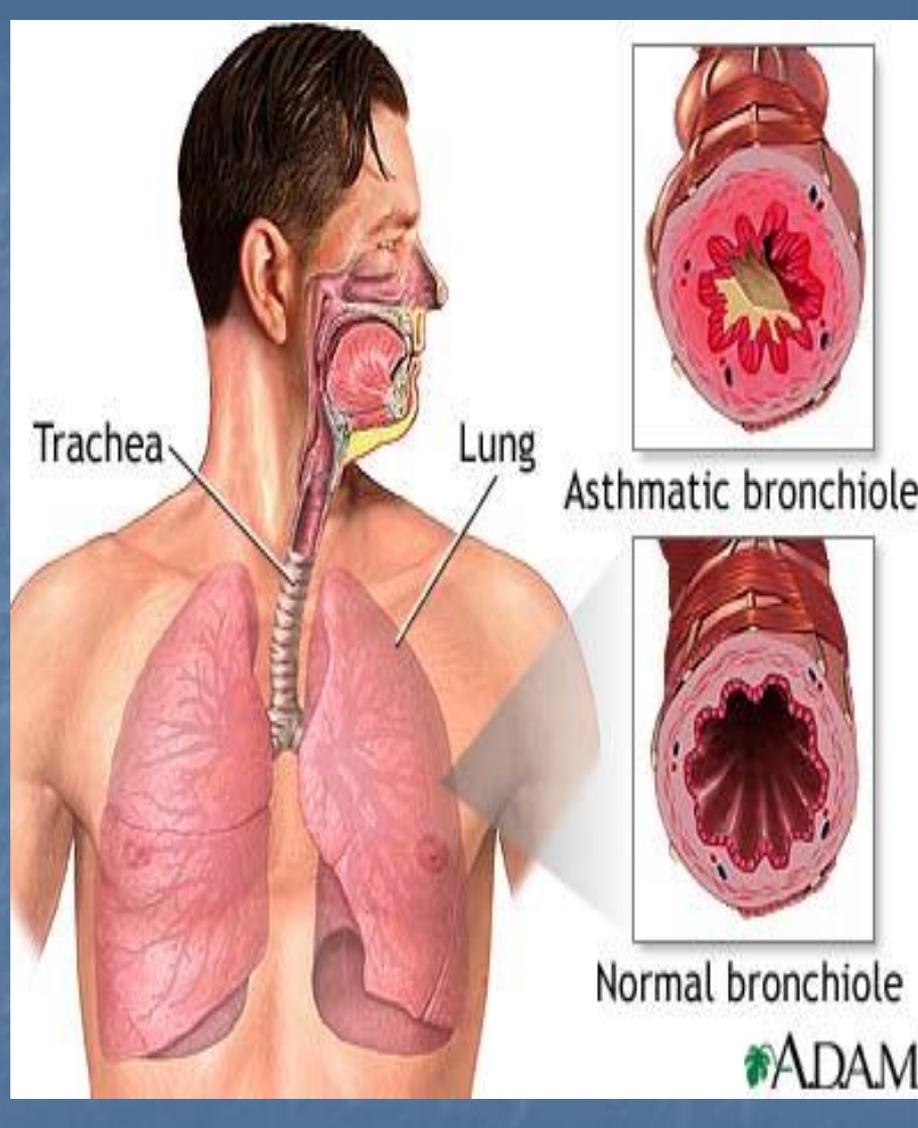
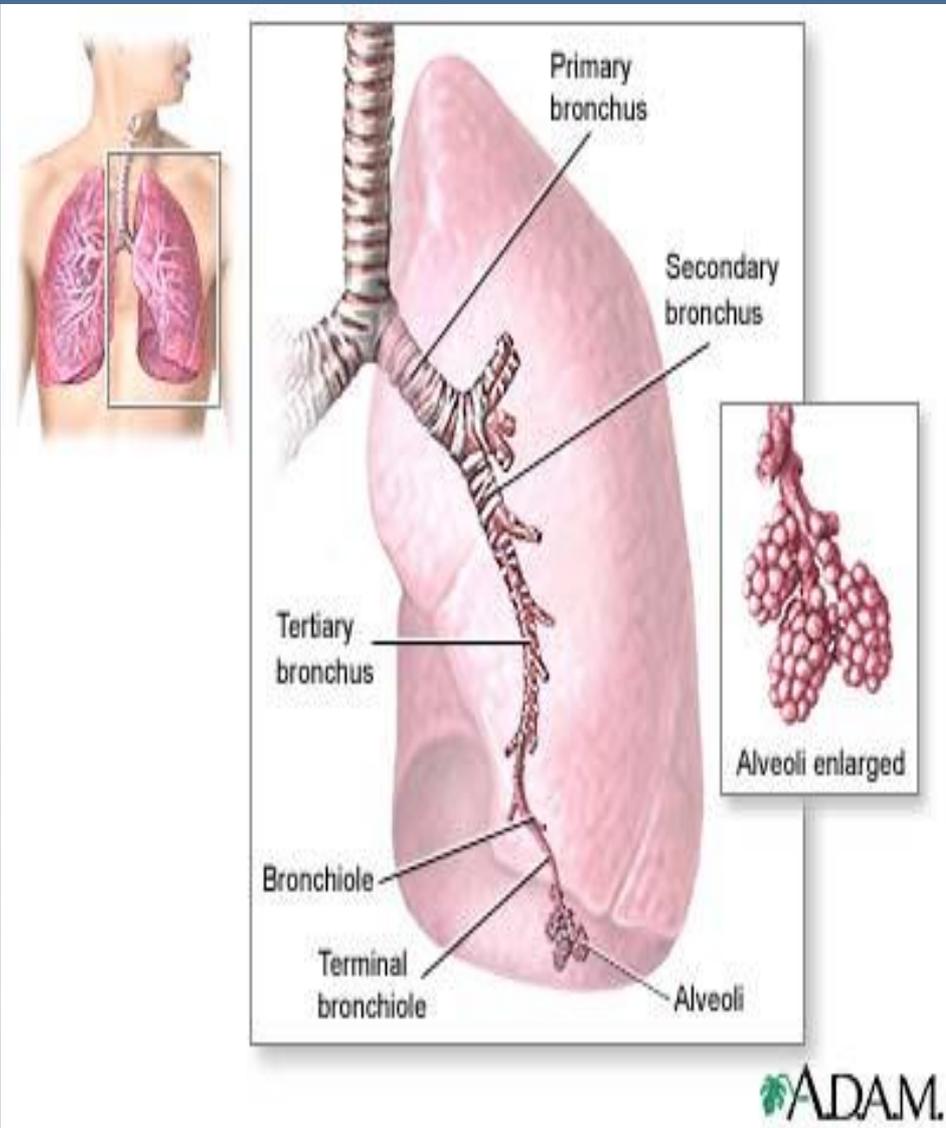


# Asthma is

- the most chronic incurable disease affecting children & the leading reason for school and workplace absenteeism
- more girls than boys have asthma with more African-Americans and Hispanics having asthma than Caucasian Americans

# Asthma

- has two main physical parts: **airway inflammation** - the airway, the path air takes from the nose to the lungs, is swollen and so becomes smaller
- and **broncho-constriction** - muscles around the airways get tight, squeezing the tubes, making them even smaller
- which results in **wheezing** (difficult breathing, making a whistling sound), coughing, chest tightness or shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get air)



# What causes asthma?

- The majority of studies say it is partly heredity: if either parent has asthma, there is a good chance the child will have it
- A leading cause is environmental factors including smoking or being around smoke or environmental chemical exposure, especially when pregnant
- Some studies say other physical diseases may contribute to someone getting the disease, things like GERD and obesity
- We don't know what causes the disease specifically
- But, we do know what causes the symptoms of the disease. When symptoms occur, it is called either an asthma flare-up or exacerbation, episode, or in the past, an asthma attack

There is no cure for asthma  
yet,  
but asthma CAN be  
controlled

# When asthma is in control

- Your child can play, run, go to school and have fun
- You and your child can sleep through the night without symptoms
- If asthma is in control, then it's easier to stop symptoms or a flare-up before they get very bad



# What are the symptoms of an asthma flare-up (exacerbation or attack)?

- Exposure to allergens cause airways to swell
- Mucus or phlegm develops
- Causing coughing/wheezing
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Inability to breathe



# What causes or triggers asthma symptoms?

- Approximately 70% of people who have asthma have asthma symptoms triggered by allergy
- Some people have symptoms every time they exercise or exert themselves – this is Exercise Induced Asthma or EIA, but almost all asthmatics will occasionally have symptoms triggered by exercise
- Environmental factors

# Allergy triggers

- 1. **Allergens** are things that occur in nature

MOLD



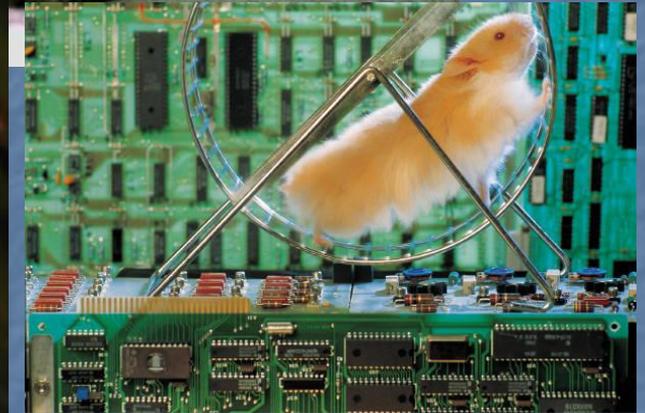
DUST



DUST MITES



# ANIMAL DANDER, URINE



# POLLENS



# WEATHER



# ROACHES



- **ALLERGY TO FOODS** can trigger asthma symptoms for some



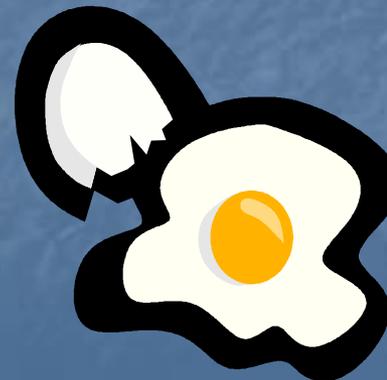
TREE NUTS



PEANUTS, A  
LEGUME



COW'S MILK



HEN'S EGGS

## 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS INCLUDING STRONG ODORS



- **CHEMICAL Irritants**, other environmental factors, can trigger a flare

## AIR POLLUTION AND EXHAUST FUMES



SMOKE



- **3. STRONG EMOTIONS**, good or bad, can cause a flare – physical or emotional stress, crying, fear, even laughter



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**4. COLDS** or other infections can be a trigger



## 6. **EXERCISE** or physical activity can cause flares



# Asthma: true or false?

- Children outgrow asthma
- Asthma is spread by contact
- Asthma is all in your head, it's not a real sickness
- Asthma isn't serious because symptoms aren't constant
- You can't play sports if you have asthma

# How is asthma controlled?

- Getting the right diagnosis
- Having an action plan that works for physician, patient and caretaker
- Identifying, then eliminating or avoiding triggers in order to control asthma flares or exacerbations through
  - ✧ Allergy testing and immunotherapy
  - ✧ Observation

- Using the right medications helps control asthma

1. Controllers
2. Relievers
3. Steroids
4. Rules of Two



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# Asthma medications can be pills, liquids, or inhalers

- Depending on asthma severity some don't need medications on a regular basis. Others may only need one type, usually the reliever variety, and others may need a combination of medications which fall into two basic categories:

- Long acting “Controller” medications to prevent chronic airway inflammation

Examples of controller medications include:

- Inhaled Steroids (Flovent, Pulmicort, Asmanex, Advair, e.g.)
  - Long-acting bronchodilators (Serevent, Foradil, e.g.)
  - Leukotriene Modifiers (Singulair)
- The second category is the “Reliever” or rescue medications. They provide immediate relief for acute airway muscle constriction and are effective in 5 to 10 minutes but relief lasts only 4-6 hours
- Examples include short acting bronchodilators (Albuterol, Xopenex, e.g.)

# Over-use of Rescue inhalers is a sign of poor control and can be dangerous

## Rules of Two:

- ▶ Is the quick-relief inhaler used more than **TWO** times per week?
- ▶ Does the patient awake at night with asthma symptoms more than **TWO** times per month?
- ▶ Is the quick-relief inhaler refilled more than **TWO** times per year?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, asthma may not be in control. Speak to a healthcare provider to make a plan that will work to better control asthma

\* Rules of Two is a trademark of Baylor Health Care System

- There are devices to help manage asthma
  1. Spacers
  2. Nebulizers
  3. Peak flow meters

Remember, if medicine isn't used correctly, it is wasted and won't help control asthma. Learn the correct way to use asthma medications.



# How might uncontrolled asthma affect your life?

- Financial issues
- Medication side effects
- Absenteeism
- Family dynamics

There is no cure for asthma yet,  
but it can be controlled

By learning all you can about asthma, your  
child and you can live a normal, healthy  
life



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