

Patient Update

Winning with exercise-induced asthma

Next month, thousands of athletes will compete at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece. Some of these athletes have exercise-induced asthma (EIA), but they do not let it stand in their way. With proper care from a physician, medication, and a training regimen, these athletes can perform at the top of their game and so can you.

About 4-7% of the population, 18 million people, is reported to have asthma. People with asthma have a hard time breathing because they have narrow airways. Most patients with chronic asthma will have a flare when they exercise. However, other individuals appear to have a flare of asthma only when they exercise and do not otherwise have chronic asthma.

After about 6-8 minutes of exercise, patients with exercise-induced asthma, experience coughing,



wheezing, tight chest, prolonged and unexpected shortness of breath. These symptoms are often worse in cold, dry air. Warm and humid air may lessen the symptoms. Unfortunately, pollens and molds are present at the times of the year when the air is warm and humid, and these substances in the air can also trigger attacks of asthma.

As many as one out of every ten young athletes has asthma, but it should not stop them from enjoying exercise or even high level competition. Exercise is good for people with EIA, as long as they take proper precautions. Work with your doctor to find the best way to treat your asthma so that you can continue to have fun as you exercise and participate in activities you like.

Famous athletes with asthma

Many world-class athletes have exercise-induced asthma. They are living proof that you can achieve what you set your mind to as long as you maintain a proper treatment program with the advice of your doctor. Take a look at this list of extraordinary athletes who have managed their asthma symptoms, while reaching the top of their game:

- Jerome Bettis, NFL football player
- Bruce Davidson, Olympic equestrian
- Tom Dolan, Olympic medalist – swimming
- Kurt Grote, Olympic medalist – swimming
- Nancy Hogshead, Olympic medalist – swimming
- Jackie Joyner-Kersey, Olympic medalist – track and field
- Bill Koch, Olympic medalist – cross-country skiing
- Greg Louganis, Olympic medalist – diving
- Debbie Meyer, Olympic medalist – swimming
- Art Monk, NFL football player
- George Murray, wheelchair athlete and Boston Marathon winner
- Hakeem Olajuwon, NBA basketball player
- Paula Radcliffe, Olympic long distance runner
- Dennis Rodman, NBA basketball player
- Jim Ryun, Olympic medalist – running, former record holder in the mile and 1,500 meters
- Amy VanDyken, Olympic swimmer
- Dominique Wilkins, NBA basketball player
- Joanna Zeiger, Olympic tri-athlete

To find an allergist/immunologist in your area or to learn more about allergies and asthma, call the AAAAI Physician Referral and Information Line at (800) 822-2762 or visit the AAAAI Web site at www.aaaai.org.

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