

Patient Update

Could you have asthma?

The tightness in your chest or ongoing cough you can't get rid of could be a signal that you have asthma, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI).

For people who have asthma, the air flowing in and out of their lungs may be blocked by muscle swelling and squeezing. Symptoms of asthma include cough, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing.

Asthma can be a tricky disease to pinpoint for a number of reasons, including the fact that there are other respiratory ailments with overlapping symptoms, and some children and adults can seem symptom free for long-periods of time but then experience intermittent asthma "attacks."

Ask yourself these questions:

For you:

- Is there a family history of asthma or allergies?
- Are you constantly short of breath and wheezing?
- When do you notice your symptoms – when you have a cold, when you are exercising or around allergens, such as pollen, mold and animal dander?
- Are you missing work because of symptoms?
- Is coughing and wheezing keeping you up at night?

For your child:

- Does your child cough, wheeze (a rattling sound when they breathe), have chest tightness or shortness of breath?
- Does your child cough or wheeze with play, exercise, laughter or during temper tantrums?
- Is your child missing school because of symptoms?
- Is coughing and wheezing keeping your child up at night?
- Is there a family history of asthma or allergies?

If you are experiencing symptoms and they are keeping you from work, school or normal activities, you should consider talking to a doctor to see if you



have asthma. Detecting asthma early can help the patient get the treatment that he or she needs.

Starting a management plan and possibly medication will allow the patient to start to feel control over their symptoms again.

Every person has their own triggers, if you have asthma, you can minimize your symptoms by avoiding the factors that trigger your symptoms and by working with your allergist/immunologist.

An allergist/immunologist is a physician specially trained to manage and treat allergies and asthma.

To help prevent symptoms, he or she will work with you to figure out your asthma triggers and develop an appropriate management plan, including developing environmental controls and prescribing medication if needed.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects 20.3 million people in the United States. It accounts for approximately 14.5 million missed work days for adults and 14 million missed school days for children annually.

To find an allergist/immunologist in your area or to learn more about 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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