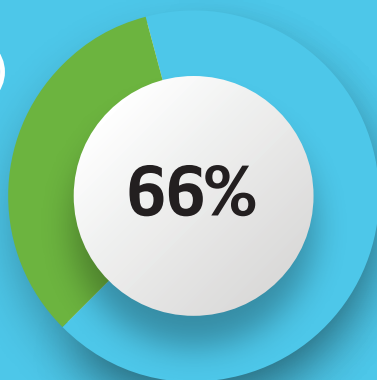


# Asthma

CAUSES, TRIGGERS & CONTROLS



**334 million**  
people in the world have asthma



**In childhood asthma  
affects almost twice as  
many boys as girls.**

**While estimating the number of people in the world with asthma remains difficult due to the many gaps in the data, the Global Burden of Diseases Study (GBD) published in 2012 gave us the latest estimate of asthma prevalence, indicating that as many as 334 million people in the world have asthma, and that the related burden is high.**

If you or a family member currently suffer from asthma, below we provide some information on the condition and education on how to cope.

## What is Asthma?

Asthma is a lung disorder that obstructs breathing, it can affect any age group, however it normally starts in early years. Recurrent breathlessness and wheezing are some of the common signs and symptoms, the severity of which can vary from person to person. It occurs due to inflammation of air passages in the lungs and can irritate the nerve endings in the airways. During an asthma attack, the lining of this passage swells, narrowing the airway and reducing air flow in and out of the lungs.

If you have asthma, you have it all the time, but you will have asthma attacks only when something bothers your lungs.

## Key facts

- Asthma is one of the major noncommunicable diseases. It is a chronic disease of the air passages of the lungs which inflames and narrows them.
- Some 334 million people currently suffer from asthma. It is a common disease among children.
- Most asthma-related deaths occur in low- and lower-middle income countries.
- The strongest risk factors for developing asthma are inhaled substances and particles that may provoke allergic reactions or irritate the airways.
- Medication can control asthma. Avoiding asthma triggers can also reduce the severity of asthma.
- Appropriate management of asthma can enable people to enjoy a good quality of life.

## The causes of Asthma

The fundamental causes of asthma are still not fully understood, however in most cases it is linked to hereditary as well as environmental factors.

The strongest risk factors for developing asthma are a combination of genetic predisposition with environmental exposure to inhaled substances and particles that may provoke allergic reactions or irritate the airways, such as:



Make sure you or your family member is getting adequate sleep. Ask your doctor about available treatments to reduce sleep disturbances caused by Asthma.



### Indoor allergens

(for example, house dust mites in bedding, carpets and stuffed furniture and pet dander)

01



### Outdoor allergens

(such as pollens and moulds)

06



### Sulfites in certain foods

02



### Tobacco smoke

07



### Chemical irritants in the workplace

03



### Air pollution

08



### Cold air

04



### Physical exercise

09



### Extreme emotional arousal

(such as anger, fear or stress)

05

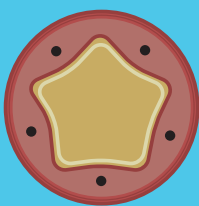


You can control your asthma by knowing the warning signs of an asthma attack, staying away from things that cause an attack, and following your doctor's advice.



With your healthcare provider's help, make your own action plan. Decide who should have a copy of your plan and where he or she should keep it.

## What physically happens during an Asthma attack



*Fig 01*  
Normal airway.  
Relaxed smooth muscles.



*Fig 02*  
Asthmatic airway.  
Relaxed smooth muscles.  
Wall inflamed and thickened.



*Fig 03*  
Asthmatic airway during attack.  
Tightened smooth muscles.  
Wall heavily inflamed and thickened.



## What is an Asthma attack?

An asthma attack may include coughing, chest tightness, wheezing, and trouble breathing. The attack happens in your body's airways, which are the paths that carry air to your lungs. As the air moves through your lungs, the airways become smaller.

During an asthma attack, the sides of the airways in your lungs swell and the airways shrink. Less air gets in and out of your lungs, and mucus that your body makes clogs up the airways even more.

An asthma attack can happen when you are exposed to "asthma triggers". Your triggers can be very different from those of someone else with asthma. Know your triggers and learn how to avoid them. Watch out for an attack when you can't avoid the triggers.



## How can you tell if you have Asthma?

It can be hard to tell if someone has asthma, especially in children under age 5.

- Do you cough a lot? (especially at night)
- Do you have breathing problems?
- Are breathing problems worse after physical activity or at certain times of the year?
- Do you have chest tightness or wheezing?
- Do you have a family history of asthma?

## Treatment and control

Although asthma cannot be cured, appropriate management can control the disease and enable those affected by it to enjoy a good quality of life.

Short-term medications are used to relieve symptoms. Medications such as long-term inhaled steroids are needed to control the progression of severe asthma.

People with persistent symptoms may take long-term medication daily to control the underlying inflammation and prevent symptoms and exacerbations.



**Control your asthma** and avoid an attack by taking your medicine exactly as your doctor tells you and by staying away from things that can trigger an attack.

## Your International Health Insurance Cover

We know it can be difficult to obtain international health insurance when you have a pre-existing condition, like Asthma. A pre-existing condition is a medical condition or any related condition for which one or more symptoms have been displayed at some point during your lifetime, irrespective of whether any medical treatment or advice was sought.

Being an expat abroad is difficult enough without having to worry about not being covered for a pre-existing condition. Fortunately, we have an extensive range of covered pre-existing medical and dental conditions for individuals and employees of small underwritten groups.

At Allianz Worldwide Care, most of our group schemes are 'Medical history disregarded', which means it doesn't matter if you have a pre-existing condition, you'll still be covered for pre-existing conditions.

## Signs & Symptoms of Asthma



01  
**Shortness of breath**



02  
**Difficulty breathing**



03  
**Dry cough**



04  
**Night cough**



05  
**Wheezing**



06  
**Chest pain or tightness**