**3 Things to Know About Asthma**

Nearly 25 million Americans suffer from asthma, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.[[1]](#endnote-1) This chronic condition is so common, that even if you don’t have it yourself, you probably know someone—a friend, a colleague, a child—who does. Health care providers and patients have many tools for managing asthma, but keeping the disease under control can still be challenging.

Asthma symptoms result from inflammation, or swelling, that narrows the airways and makes them more sensitive than usual. The most common symptoms are coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath. These symptoms can be brought on by triggers such as tobacco smoke, dust, chemicals and pollen which may worsen the inflammation of the airways.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute’s *Learn More Breathe BetterSM* national health education program provides information and resources on asthma, COPD and other lung diseases and conditions to people living with the diseases, their caregivers and the health care providers who help treat them.

Here are three things the *Learn More Breathe Better* program wants you to know about asthma.

**Asthma is a serious lung disease**. While symptoms can range from mild to severe, a person can die during an asthma attack. That is why it’s important for someone with the condition, as well as his or her family members, to know how to manage particular symptoms and when to get emergency medical help.

**Asthma doesn’t go away, and it can’t be cured**. Once a person develops asthma, he or she is likely to have it for a lifetime. In other words, children rarely outgrow asthma. Even when symptoms aren’t present, the condition is still there and can flare up at any time.

**Asthma can be managed.** Like diabetes and high blood pressure, asthma takes ongoing monitoring and management to keep it under control. Managing the disease effectively means working closely with a health care provider, taking medications as prescribed, avoiding asthma triggers like exposure to allergens, poor air quality, or tobacco smoke, and watching for any changes in symptoms. These steps can help anyone with asthma gain – and keep – control of his or her health.

Currently, it is unknown if people with asthma are at higher risk of getting infected with COVID-19, but if you do get infected you may be at higher risk of getting very sick. COVID-19 can affect your respiratory tract (nose, throat, lungs), cause an asthma attack, and possibly lead to pneumonia and acute respiratory disease.

For more information and resources on asthma, visit nhlbi.nih.gov/BreatheBetter.

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1. 2017 National Health Interview Survey [↑](#endnote-ref-1)