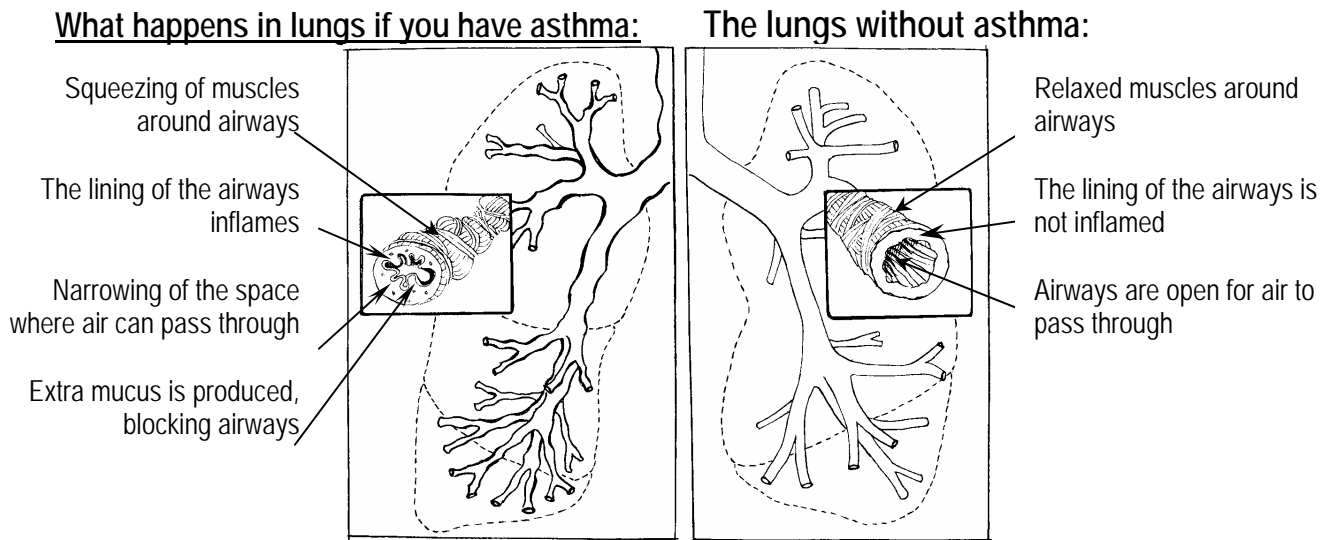


Information About Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease of the lung airways. A person with asthma has airways that are extra-sensitive to, and irritated by, various things called **asthma triggers**. These are different for different people, but could include:

1. Illnesses, such as colds or the flu
2. Allergies to dust, pollen and plants, mold, animals, and certain foods
3. Exercise
4. Cold air or warm air, wind, sudden changes in temperature
5. Smoke (especially cigarette or cigar), air pollution, strong smells
6. Emotional stress or strong emotions (crying, laughing, anxiety)

These things can make you feel **symptoms** like: wheeze (a whistling sound in your chest), cough, difficulty breathing, feeling tightness in your chest, and shallow breathing, and a lower peak flow (measured with a "peak flow meter").



You can control your asthma! Work with your doctor, clinic nurse, or school nurse. Talk openly with them and ask questions. Ask for an **asthma action plan** to help you respond to changes in your symptoms.

With well-controlled asthma, you will have:

- Fewer symptoms
- Fewer asthma "flare-ups" (also called attacks or episodes)
- Active participation in physical activities
- Normal or almost normal lung capacity
- Fewer or no side effects from using your asthma medications

The three main ways to manage your asthma are:

1. THE ENVIRONMENT – Avoid things in your physical environment that could cause symptoms
2. YOUR AIRWAYS – Use medications called controllers or preventers to control airway inflammation.
3. ASTHMA ATTACKS OR EPISODES - Be alert to beginnings of symptoms, and respond immediately by taking medication and by avoiding the asthma triggers, if possible.

Avoiding your asthma triggers

The more triggers that you are exposed to at the same time, the more likely that you will have symptoms! For example, if you are sensitive to cold air, dust, and cats, being near all three of these close together in time (1 day or so) may cause an asthma attack. Sometimes being near one trigger will not cause an attack, but being near three will cause one. When you have an attack, think about what triggers you were near. Avoid as many triggers as possible!