

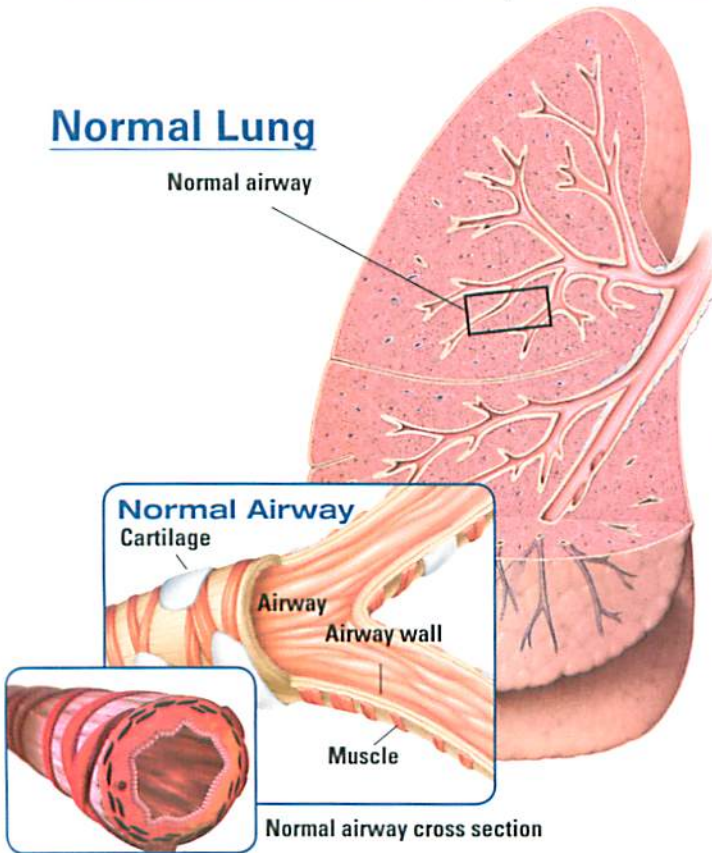
# Understanding Asthma

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease—one that cannot be cured. When you have asthma, the airways in your lungs are very sensitive and can become inflamed and swollen. In addition, certain triggers can cause airway muscles to squeeze; this is called bronchoconstriction. The airways also can produce excess mucus.

### Normal Lung

Normal airway



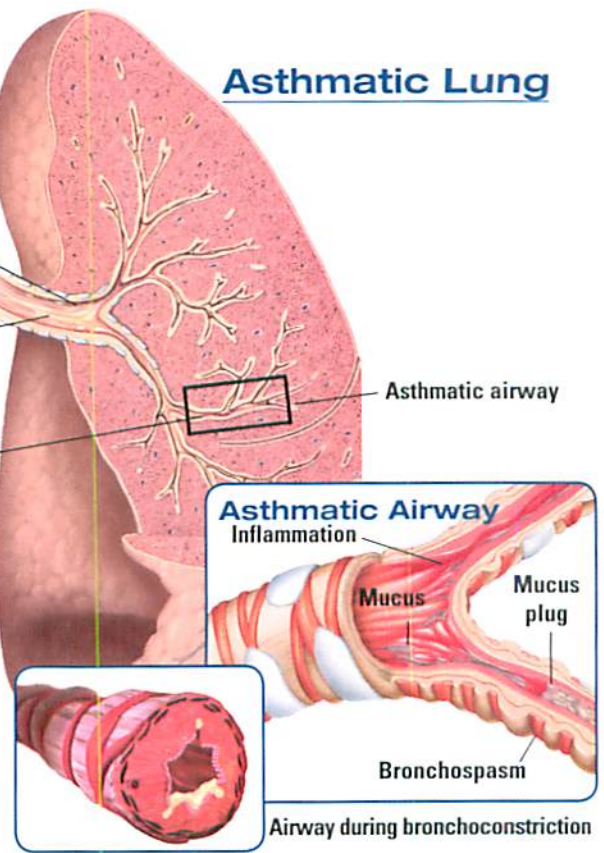
### Asthmatic Lung

Inflammation

Mucus

Bronchoconstriction

Asthmatic airway



## Symptoms of asthma

- Chest tightness
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing

## What are triggers of asthma?

Substances or conditions called triggers cause airways in the lungs to become more inflamed and swollen. Asthma triggers vary from person to person. Below is a list of many common asthma triggers.

### Allergens

- Pollen—microscopic particles released from trees, grasses, or weeds
- Dust mites—tiny bugs that live in house dust
- Pet dander—skin scales that furry or feathery pets shed
- Indoor molds—spores from molds form in warm, damp, dark places

### Other asthma triggers

- Pollution
- Cold air
- Colds and viruses
- Tobacco smoke
- Exercise



Pollen



Dust mites



Pet dander



Indoor molds



Pollution



Cold air



Colds and viruses



Tobacco smoke



Exercise

# Understanding Asthma

## Did you know?

Asthma is a major health problem in the United States, as declared by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).



23 million Americans have asthma.



Nearly 1.8 million emergency room visits in 2005 were the result of asthma flare-ups.



Asthma caused more than 10 million missed work days in 2005.



The cost of asthma is estimated to be at least \$19 billion a year.



Among chronic diseases, asthma has been a major cause of missed school days for children 5 to 17 years old.

## Daily controller medicines can help.

- A goal of asthma control is not just to relieve asthma symptoms but to prevent them before they start.
- People who use their fast-acting inhaler more than 2 days a week may have **poorly controlled** asthma. According to the guidelines from the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, those people may benefit from additional treatment with a controller medicine taken every day.

## My asthma notes

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Provided as an educational resource by Merck

