



## What is asthma?

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways, the tubes that carry air in and out of your lungs. If you have asthma, the airways are more sensitive than normal. When you come into contact with a 'trigger' your airways become inflamed and narrow, the muscle around them tighten and there is an increase in the production of sticky mucus (phlegm.)

**Common triggers:** house dust, chest infections, pollen, animal fur, tobacco smoke, cold air and exercise.

**Asthma symptoms:** wheezing, coughing, breathlessness and difficulty breathing.

Agreeing an asthma plan with your doctor or nurse is an important step towards keeping your asthma symptoms under control

## What you can do:

- Make sure you take your treatments as directed in this leaflet.
- See your doctor or nurse if symptoms get worse or do not improve.

## What to do in an asthma attack

An emergency is when any of the following may happen:

1. Your reliever (blue inhaler) does not help.
2. Your symptoms get worse (cough, wheeze, tight chest, breathlessness).
3. You are too breathless to speak.

## What you must do

1. Take your reliever (blue inhaler) immediately.
2. Call your doctor, the out-of-hours GP service or an ambulance if not better after five minutes
3. Continue to take your reliever every five minutes until help arrives (*you cannot overdose on a reliever (blue) inhaler*).

## How to recognise if your asthma is getting worse

- Have you had difficulty sleeping because of your asthma symptoms (including coughing)?
- Have you had asthma symptoms during the daytime (cough, wheeze, tight chest or breathlessness)?
- Has your asthma interfered with your usual activities (i.e. sport or housework)?

If you answer 'yes' to one or more of the above then make an appointment to see your doctor or nurse.

If you answer 'yes' to all three of these questions, is it an emergency? If so, follow the steps on the previous page and seek help immediately.