



## FACTS

In Australia, asthma affects one in ten children and adults; that is over two million people.

Globally asthma affects over 300 million people and this figure is estimated to rise to 400 million by 2025.

# Asthma



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## WHAT IS ASTHMA?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease, that can be controlled but not cured. It is characterised by inflammation, “twitchy” airways and long-term changes, especially airway narrowing.

Symptoms such as wheezing, chest tightness and breathlessness occur when airways narrow spontaneously, when the airway wall is thickened or after exposure to “triggers”. These triggers are different for different people, but they may be viruses (especially the common cold), allergens (house dust mite, moulds, cats and dogs), irritants including smoke or pollution, exercise, and some food and food additives.

## WHAT IS THE CAUSE?

The primary cause of asthma is unknown. The disease is uncommon in non-affluent countries and the risk of developing asthma in countries like Australia is associated with environmental, lifestyle and genetic factors.

## WHO GETS ASTHMA?

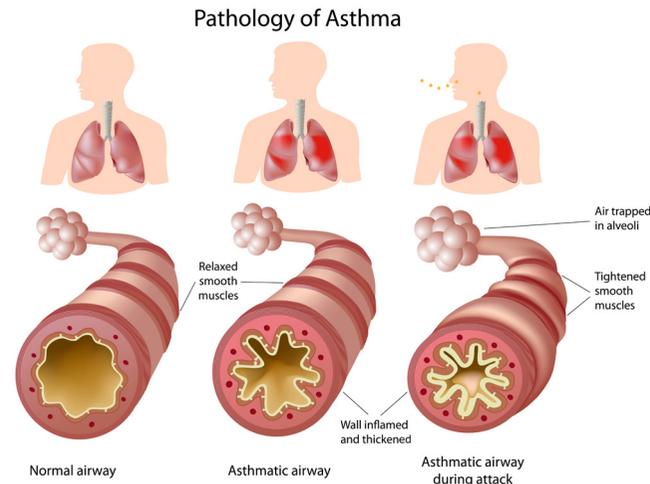
Asthma can affect people of all ages. Some people have symptoms in very early childhood that continue throughout their lives. Some children “grow out” of their asthma in teenage years but in about 30% of these cases, it reappears in adult life. Asthma can also occur for the first time in adulthood.

## WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS AND IS THERE A CURE?

There is no known cure for asthma. Current therapies include inhaled “relievers” that provide short-term relief of symptoms by opening up the airways, and “preventers” that, when taken regularly, prevent symptoms from occurring and reduce the risk of asthma flare-ups.

Good management enables many people to keep their asthma symptoms under control, and their disease remains stable over time. However, many people do not take available treatments regularly, and a small proportion do not respond well to available treatments. These people are more likely to have persisting asthma symptoms and flare-ups.

Expert assessment by respiratory clinicians can assist patients and general practitioners in managing asthma.



## 5 Simple Questions for Assessing Asthma Control

**Have you experienced any of the following more than once a week in the last month?**

1. Symptoms of asthma such as cough, wheeze, shortness of breath?
2. Waking at night because of asthma?
3. Chest tightness on waking?
4. Difficulty in performing vigorous activity like running, lifting heavy objects, exercise?
5. Difficulty in performing moderate activities like vacuuming, climbing flights of stairs?

**‘Yes’ to any of these questions indicates you may have poorly controlled asthma. Further assessment is needed from a healthcare professional.**

## ASTHMA AT THE WOOLCOCK

Our experts include clinicians and respiratory specialists, epidemiologists, statisticians, molecular biologists, pharmacologists, pharmacists, physiologists, microbiologists and psychologists.

We study the prevalence, risk factors and disease burden in the community, the cellular, molecular and physiological mechanisms of asthma, risk factors such as air pollution and viruses, novel diagnostic techniques, and people’s perceptions and attitudes to treatments, as well as guidelines, treatments and management strategies to improve the care of people with asthma.

Our expert clinicians at the Woolcock Clinic can assess patients with asthma, and provide advice with the aim of optimising their asthma control.

The Woolcock Institute of Medical Research is a not-for-profit organisation.

If you are interested in further information about becoming involved in our research studies or donations, please visit our website [www.woolcock.org.au](http://www.woolcock.org.au).

Your contribution will make a difference.  
Thank you for your support.

