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## Asthma and exercise

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### Summary

- Regular activity is an important part of life. Don't let asthma stop you from being active.
  - Exercise can sometimes trigger exercise-induced asthma.
  - Exercise-induced asthma can be prevented with medication, and by preparing for exercise and physical activity.
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Exercise and physical activity are vital for keeping fit and healthy, and are an important part of good asthma management. Sometimes, however, exercising or being physically active can trigger an episode of asthma. This is called exercise-induced asthma (EIA). It is also known as exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) and both terms are often used.

Exercise-induced asthma is usually easily managed and should be part of any asthma management plan. In fact, regular exercise will improve your overall health and wellbeing.

You should be able to exercise as often as you wish. If you regularly experience asthma symptoms during exercise, consult your doctor or respiratory specialist.

People with asthma should be able to participate in almost any sport or exercise. Scuba diving is the only sport not recommended.

Most people with asthma can exercise to their full potential if they have good asthma control. Many top athletes who have competed at the national and international level have asthma, such as David Beckham (soccer player) and Tex Walker (AFL player).

### Exercise-induced asthma

When resting, you normally breathe through your nose, which warms and moistens the air travelling to your lungs. During exercise and physical activity, you will often breathe more quickly through your mouth, causing cold and dry air to travel to your lungs, irritating the airways. The cold and dry air can cause the muscles around the airway to tighten, increasing the chance of experiencing an asthma flare-up.

Shortness of breath during or after physical activity is common. However, if physical activity causes symptoms with no relief after rest, you may have exercise-induced asthma.

Those symptoms include:

- shortness of breath
- feeling of a tight chest
- dry or persistent cough
- wheeze.

If you experience asthma symptoms during physical activity or exercise, consult your doctor for further advice.

### Tips to help prevent exercise-induced asthma

To prevent exercise-induced asthma, suggestions include:

- Make sure that your asthma is being well managed, as this will make exercise-induced asthma less likely to occur.
  - Always carry your reliever medication and spacer with you.
  - If written on your Asthma Action Plan, take your reliever medication up to 15 minutes before warming up.
  - Warm up before exercise as usual.
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- During exercise, watch for asthma symptoms and stop and take your reliever medication if symptoms appear. Only return to exercise if your asthma symptoms have been relieved. If asthma symptoms appear for a second time during exercise, take your reliever medication again until symptoms have been relieved. It is not recommended that you return to the activity.
- After exercise, cool down as usual. Asthma symptoms can occur up to half an hour after exercise. Make sure you take your reliever medication if you have symptoms after exercise.

### Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Pharmacist**
- **Asthma Australia** Tel. 1800 ASTHMA (**1800 278 462**)
- Australian Government, **Australian Sports Anti-doping Authority** (for guidelines for athletes on medication and sport) Tel. 13 000 ASADA (**13 000 27232**)

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Asthma Australia

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