

## What is thunderstorm asthma?

Certain thunderstorms can cause grass pollen grains to burst, releasing allergens that may trigger asthma attacks known as thunderstorm asthma. While uncommon, it can occur during the grass pollen season (typically between October and December).

## Who is at risk:

- Anyone with asthma (current, past or undiagnosed).
- Anyone with seasonal hay fever during spring.



To receive this publication in an accessible format phone **1300 761 874**, using the National Relay Service **13 36 77** if required, or email [climate.publichealth@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:climate.publichealth@health.vic.gov.au)

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne. © State of Victoria, Department of Health, September 2024. Available from <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/about/our-campaigns>

ISBN 978-1-76131-430-8 (pdf/online/MS word) 231062



# Thunderstorm asthma can be life-threatening

Know the risks. Get prepared. Stay safe.

For more information visit [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/thunderstorm-asthma](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/thunderstorm-asthma)





## Stay safe during grass pollen season

You can reduce your chances of being affected by thunderstorm asthma.

Avoid thunderstorms during this season, especially the wind gusts before the storm.

Go inside, close doors and windows, and turn off air conditioning that may bring outside air in (e.g. evaporative air conditioners).

Learn asthma first aid, and make sure you understand what to do if you, a friend or family member, gets an asthma flare or attack.

Check the epidemic thunderstorm asthma forecast regularly on the VicEmergency website or app and set up a 'watch zone' to receive advice and warnings for your area.

## If you have asthma:

- See your doctor regularly to ensure good asthma control, and create or review your asthma action plan.
- Take your preventer medication as directed and carry your reliever medication with you at all times.

## If you have hay fever:

- See your doctor or pharmacist to discuss your best treatment and your risk of thunderstorm asthma.
- Learn asthma first aid and know where you can get an asthma reliever puffer if needed. These are available from pharmacies without a prescription.

# If you think someone is having an asthma attack...



**Step 1** – Sit the person upright.



**Step 2** – Shake the blue/grey puffer, put 1 puff into a spacer, and take 4 breaths from the spacer. Repeat this 4 times.



**Step 3** – Wait 4 minutes, and repeat step 2 if breathing does not return to normal.



**Step 4** – If the person's breathing does not return to normal, call Triple Zero (000). Repeat step 2 every 4 minutes while you wait.