

Asthma Facts

Millions of people world-wide are affected by asthma and its debilitating effects. In the United States alone, well over 15 million people suffer from the disease, and over 5,000 of them die from Asthma attacks each year.

Although many causes of Asthma have been identified, the most unfortunate cases are of those of children, directly inheriting the disease from their affected parents. However, the most common contributing factors are allergies to dust mites, pollen, mould and fungus spores, animals and smoke.

Other prior ailments can also lead to the formation of the disease including bouts of bronchitis and pneumonia.

Given the right environment, it would appear that no-one is totally immune from Asthma. Indiscriminate attacks can happen at any time, from children as young as 6 months to adults well into their 60's being equally susceptible.

Asthma is an incurable chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways. When the airways react, they get narrower causing a reduction in air flow through to the lung tissues.

The symptoms are similar to a chesty cough or cold, with wheezing, shortness of breath, and a feeling of tightening of the chest. Since any one of these symptoms can be associated with other ailments, it's important to seek medical advice.

Some of the most common treatments for the control of Asthma are inhaled *corticosteroids*, taken for mild to severe attacks, and *bronchodilators*, formulated as liquid and pill medications. For long-term control, Leukotriene modifiers are usually prescribed, in combination with inhaled corticosteroids.

Some treatments are known to produce unpleasant side effects, such as loss of sleep, cough, heart palpitations, nervousness, dry throat and uncontrollable tremors of the hands (also known as "the shakes").

Prednisone can cause increased appetite, weight gain, bloating, nausea, upset stomach and vomiting as well as peptic ulcers, increased blood sugar levels, impaired wound healing and an increased risk of infection. *Intal* can cause throat irritation, wheezing, or cough as well as nausea, and headache.

The medical profession do not yet know how to prevent the inflammation of the airways that leads to asthma. Sufferers can only be advised to be aware of and avoid situations which may cause an attack and to take the recommended medication as directed by their doctor.