

Secondhand smoke and asthma

What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the airways of the lungs. During an asthma attack, airways (tubes that carry air to your lungs) become swollen, making it hard to breathe. As the walls of the airways swell, they narrow, and less air gets in and out of the lungs. Cells in the airways can make more mucus (a sticky, thick liquid) than usual, which can make breathing even harder.

Symptoms of an asthma attack include:

- Coughing
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Wheezing
- Tightness or pain in the chest
- Asthma attacks can be mild, moderate, or serious—and even life threatening.



How is smoking related to asthma?

If you have asthma, an asthma attack can occur when something irritates your airways and “triggers” an attack. Your triggers might be different from other people’s triggers.

Tobacco smoke is one of the most common asthma triggers. Tobacco smoke—including secondhand smoke—is unhealthy for everyone, especially people with asthma. Secondhand smoke is a mixture of gases and fine particles that includes:

- Smoke from a burning cigarette, cigar, or pipe tip
- Smoke that has been exhaled (breathed out) by someone who smokes.

Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including hundreds that are toxic and about 70 that can cause cancer.

- If you have asthma, it’s important that you avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.
- If you are among the 21% of U.S. adults who have asthma and smoke, quit smoking.

How can asthma attacks be prevented?

If you or a family member has asthma, you can manage it with the help of your health care provider (for example, by taking your medicines exactly as your doctor tells you) and by avoiding triggers. Staying far away from tobacco smoke is one important way to avoid asthma attacks. Some other helpful tips are:

- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke in your home or car. Opening a window does not protect you from smoke.
- If your state still allows smoking in public areas, look for restaurants and other places that do not allow smoking. “No-smoking sections” in the same restaurant with “smoking sections” do not protect adequately from secondhand smoke—even if there is a filter or ventilation system.
- Make sure your children’s day care centers and schools are tobacco-free. For schools, a tobacco-free campus policy means no tobacco use or advertising on school property is allowed by anyone at any time. This includes off-campus school events.
- Teach children to stay away from secondhand smoke. Be a good role model by not smoking.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/diseases/secondhand-smoke-asthma.html>



Asthma risk factors

A number of factors are thought to increase your chances of developing asthma. These include:

- Having a blood relative (such as a parent or sibling) with asthma
- Having another allergic condition, such as atopic dermatitis or allergic rhinitis (hay fever)
- Being overweight
- Being a smoker
- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Having a mother who smoked while pregnant
- Exposure to exhaust fumes or other types of pollution
- Exposure to occupational triggers, such as chemicals used in farming, hairdressing and manufacturing.

Exposure to allergens, exposure to certain germs or parasites, and having some types of bacterial or viral infections also may be risk factors. However, more research is needed to determine what role they may play in developing asthma.

Source: Mayo Clinic

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<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/asthma/basics/risk-factors/con-20026992>

Secondhand smoke and children

Children who are around others who smoke are much more likely to:

- Need emergency room care more often
- Miss school more often
- Have asthma that is harder to control
- Have more colds
- Begin smoking themselves.

No one should smoke in your house. This includes you, your visitors, your child's babysitters, and anyone else who comes to your house.

Smokers should smoke outside and wear a coat. The coat will keep smoke particles from sticking to their clothes. They should leave the coat outside or away from a child with asthma. Ask people who work at your child's daycare, preschool, school, and anyone else who takes care of your child if they smoke. If they do, make sure they smoke away from your child. Stay away from restaurants and bars that allow smoking. Or, ask for a table as far away from smokers as possible.

Source: U.S. national Library of Medicine
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<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/patientinstructions/000504.htm>

Facts about quitting smoking

- Nicotine is the ingredient in cigarettes that causes addiction. Smokers not only become physically addicted to nicotine; they also link smoking with many social activities, making smoking an extremely difficult addiction to break.
- Quitting smoking often requires multiple attempts. Using counseling or medication alone increases the chance of a quit attempt being successful; the combination of both is even more effective.
- There are seven medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to aid in quitting smoking. Nicotine patches, nicotine gum and nicotine lozenges are available over-the-counter, and a nicotine nasal spray and inhaler are currently available by prescription. Bupropion SR (Zyban) and varenicline (Chantix) are non-nicotine pills.
- Individual, group and telephone counseling are effective. Telephone quitline counseling is widely available and is effective for many different groups of smokers.

The American Lung Association has more information available on quitting smoking and our programs to help you do so, our advocacy efforts to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, and tobacco use trends on our website at www.lung.org, or through the Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872).

Source: American Lung Association
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<http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/about-smoking/health-effects/smoking.html>

→ Cigarette smoking and asthma—a harmful mix

20%-35% of adults worldwide with asthma are cigarette smokers, rates which are surprisingly similar to the general population. People with mild to moderate asthma who smoke cigarettes:

- Experience worse symptoms
- Are more likely to attend hospital with an attack of asthma
- Often have a different type of airway inflammation than non-smokers with asthma.

Source: American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology
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<http://www.aaaai.org/global/latest-research-summaries/Current-JACI-Research/cigarette-smoking-severe-asthma.aspx>

Limas and spinach

Ingredients

- 2 c frozen lima beans
- ½ c onion, chopped
- 1 c fennel bulb, rinsed and cut into 4-inch strips
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- ¼ c low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 bag (10 oz) leaf spinach, rinsed
- 1 Tbsp distilled vinegar
- ⅛ tsp ground black pepper
- 1 Tbsp dried chives

Directions

1. In a saucepan, steam or boil lima beans in unsalted water for about 10 minutes. Drain.
2. In sauté pan, sauté onions and fennel in oil.
3. Add beans and chicken broth to sauté pan, and cover. Cook for 2 minutes.
4. Stir in spinach. Cover and cook until spinach has wilted, about 2 minutes.
5. Stir in vinegar and pepper. Cover and let stand for 30 seconds.
6. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

Source: American Heart, Lung, and Blood
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<https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/recipe/detail.aspx?cId=0&rId=8>