

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



September, 2012

Asthma 101

Asthma makes breathing difficult for more than 34 million Americans. Asthma symptoms, which include coughing, wheezing, and chest tightness, are common in an asthma attack. Sometimes asthma is called bronchial asthma or reactive airway disease. Asthma in children is on the rise, but with proper treatment for symptoms of asthma, kids and adults can live well.

Let's consider some commonly asked questions regarding asthma.

Question?

Do you have to wheeze in order to have asthma?

Answer

Asthma is characterized by inflammation of the bronchial tubes with increased production of sticky secretions inside the tubes. People with asthma experience symptoms when the airways tighten, inflame, or fill with mucus. Common asthma symptoms include:

- Coughing, especially at night
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness, pain, or pressure

Still, not every person with asthma has the same symptoms in the same



way. You may not have all of these symptoms, or you may have different symptoms at different times. Your asthma symptoms may also vary from one asthma attack to the next, being mild during one and severe during another. Sometimes asthma symptoms include sighing, fatigue, and rapid breathing, not coughing or wheezing.

Some people with asthma may go for extended periods without having any symptoms, interrupted by periodic worsening of their symptoms called asthma attacks. Others might have asthma symptoms every day. Mild asthma attacks are generally more common. Usually, the airways open up within a few minutes to a few hours. Severe attacks are less common but last longer and require immediate medical help. It is important to recognize and treat even mild asthma symptoms to help you prevent severe episodes and keep asthma under better control.

Question

Are there different types of asthma?

Answer

Advances in the understanding of asthma have helped experts define specific types of asthma, such as **exercise-induced asthma** (asthma that occurs with physical exertion), **cough-variant asthma**, and **nighttime asthma** (asthma that makes sleeping miserable and is quite serious).

Exercise-induced asthma is a type of asthma triggered by exercise or physical exertion. Many people with asthma experience some degree of symptoms with exercise. However, there are many people without asthma, including Olympic athletes, who develop symptoms only during exercise.

In the type of asthma called **cough-variant asthma**, severe coughing

(Over)

Asthma 101 (Continued)

is the predominant symptom. There can be other causes of cough such as postnasal drip, chronic rhinitis, sinusitis, or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD or heartburn). Coughing because of sinusitis with asthma is common.

Nighttime asthma, also called nocturnal asthma, is a common type of the disease. If you have asthma, the chances of having symptoms are much higher during sleep because asthma is powerfully influenced by the sleep-wake cycle (circadian rhythms). Your asthma symptoms of wheezing, cough, and trouble breath-

ing are common and dangerous, particularly at nighttime.

Question

What asthma treatments are available and how would I know which one to chose?

Answer

Anti-inflammatory drugs, particularly inhaled steroids, are the most important treatment for most people with asthma. These lifesaving medications prevent asthma attacks and work by reducing swelling and mucus production in the airways. As a result, the airways are less sensitive and less likely to react to asthma triggers and cause asthma symptoms.

The the most common and effective way to deliver asthma drugs to the lungs are by the use of:

- **Asthma Inhalers** (Metered dose inhalers (MDIs) and Dry powder inhalers (DPIs))

OR

- **Asthma Nebulizer** (also known as a breathing machine)

While asthma is a common disease, it's also a very serious breathing problem that demands a proper medical diagnosis and targeted asthma treatment. Get help for asthma. Talk to your doctor for asthma support and find the right asthma drugs that work best for you.

Source: webmd.com

Benefits Corner

Disease Management

What is Disease Management?

Disease management is used to help coordinate care for enrollees who have been diagnosed with specific, persistent or chronic conditions. Disease management programs may be offered to enrollees with high-risk pregnancies or who have been diagnosed with chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

How does the Disease Management work?

Disease management strategy includes working with the enrollee to promote self-management and encouraging compliance with the plan of care developed by the enrollee's provider. Disease management emphasizes disease prevention, Enrollee education and coordination of care to avoid acute episodes and/or gradual worsening of the disease over time. Anthem's disease management programs are based on the best evidence and practices available in peer-reviewed medical literature. Reports are regularly communicated to the enrollee's provider to promote continuity of care.

Is this program voluntary?

Yes, participation in disease management programs is voluntary and enrollees may choose whether to participate at anytime. More complicated conditions may require more intense and/or frequent services.

The participating provider agreement of providing covered services may include financial incentives or risk sharing relationships related to the provision of services or referral to other providers, including participating providers and disease management programs. Enrollees may contact the provider or Anthem for questions regarding such incentives or risk sharing relationships.

Participation in Ongoing Needs Programs - There are several ways for eligible enrollees to become involved in an Anthem care management or disease management program. Anthem can identify enrollees that the plan believes may benefit from the programs, or physicians may refer their County Health Pool patients to Anthem. Enrollees may also contact Anthem directly by calling Anthem's "Help Line" at (303) 764-7066 or (877) 225-2583. Additional information about Anthem's disease management and wellness programs is available at www.anthem.com under the BlueCares for You heading.