



Tip#7: Asthma and Physical Activity

Adapted from: The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

What do Olympians Amy Van Dyken, Jackie Joyner-Kersey, and Greg Louganis all have in common?

Each of these gold medalists has asthma.

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that affects more than 25 million Americans. Signs and symptoms of asthma include recurring periods of wheezing (a whistling sound when you breathe), chest tightness, shortness of breath, and coughing.

Many things can bring on or worsen asthma symptoms. These include irritants in the environment, such as cigarette or other tobacco smoke, air pollutants, and strong smells and chemical sprays (perfumes, household cleaners, and pesticide sprays). Asthma symptoms also can be caused by allergens from dust mites, animal dander from pets with fur or hair, cockroach droppings, mold, and pollen.

Physical activity can bring on symptoms in most people with exercise-induced bronchospasm. The symptoms may occur either during or right after being active. If you have good control of your asthma, exercise should not be a problem for you. In fact, most people with asthma should be able to participate in any physical activity they like without having asthma symptoms.



Five Questions

Here are five questions for you to consider as you progress through this challenge.

- 1. If you had one wish relating to improving your health and fitness, what would it be?*
- 2. What's the best way you can track your progress?*
- 3. To date, what's the biggest fitness success you have experienced?*
- 4. Are others happy with the changes you are making?*
- 5. What emotion best describes how you feel about yourself when you make a conscious decision not to exercise?*





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Tips to prevent or reduce asthma symptoms caused by physical activity:

- Ask your doctor about using a quick-relief inhaler 5 minutes before exercise. This usually can prevent and control exercise-induced asthma.
- Try warming up before exercise. Warming up may help you handle continuous exercise without having to stop repeatedly to take more medicine. Good ways to warm up include walking, doing flexibility exercises, or trying other low-intensity activities.
- Tell your doctor if you have to use your short-acting beta2-agonist often during or after exercise. It may be a sign that you need a long-term medicine.
- If you have been having mild asthma symptoms before you start your physical activity, you should consider modifying the intensity, length, or type of activity you do.
- Try exercising indoors when outside temperatures are extreme, or the ozone level is high. The same is true if you have outdoor allergies, and the grass has recently been mowed, or pollen counts are high.



Work with your health care provider to manage your asthma. Together, develop a written asthma action plan that will tell you what to do to prevent asthma symptoms, how to control your asthma triggers, and what to do if an asthma attack happens. Share copies of the written asthma action plan with family members, caregivers, and others who can help. Asthma has no cure. However, with today's knowledge and treatments, most people who have asthma can lead a normal, active life.

