



Asthma: Symptoms of Difficulty Breathing

Table of Contents

- Overview
- Credits

Overview

When you have asthma, it's important to know the symptoms of trouble breathing, such as breathing faster than normal or using your chest and belly muscles to breathe. Follow your asthma action plan to know what to do.

When you have trouble breathing, your symptoms may be mild, moderate, or severe.

- **Symptoms of mild trouble breathing:**
 - Breathing slightly faster than normal
 - Normal skin color
- **Symptoms of moderate trouble breathing:**
 - Breathing faster than normal
 - Tiring quickly when you talk or eat. You may have to catch your breath during eating.
 - Using your belly muscles to help you breathe. Your belly moves in instead of out when you breathe in.
 - Skin color—especially on your face, hands, and feet—is pale to slightly gray or is a lace-like purple and pale pattern (mottled). But your tongue, gums, and lips remain pink.
- **Symptoms of severe trouble breathing:**
 - Breathing very fast. Children usually grunt with each breath. When you're short of breath, it can make it hard to speak smoothly.
 - Appearing anxious and being unable to eat because it's too hard to breathe.
 - Using your neck, chest, and belly muscles to breathe. The skin between your ribs pulls in with each breath. You also may open your nostrils wide when you breathe in.
 - Taking longer than usual to breathe out and sometimes having a high-pitched, musical sound when you breathe in.
 - Sitting up, leaning forward, or sitting with your nose tilted up as if sniffing the air.
 - Skin color that is persistently pale, gray, bluish, or mottled, including the tongue, lips, earlobes, and nail beds.

Credits

Current as of: October 25, 2024

Author: Ignite Healthwise, LLC Staff (<https://www.healthwise.org/specialpages/legal/abouthw/en>)

Clinical Review Board (<https://www.healthwise.org/specialpages/legal/abouthw/en>)

All Healthwise education is reviewed by a team that includes physicians, nurses, advanced practitioners, registered dietitians, and other healthcare professionals.

Note: The "printer friendly" document will not contain all the information available in the online document. Some information (e.g. cross-references to other topics, definitions or medical illustrations) is only available in the online version.



This information does not replace the advice of a doctor. Ignite Healthwise, LLC, disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.

© 2024 Ignite Healthwise, LLC.