

Asthma Basics

With the right care, most children with asthma live a normal, healthy life. This sheet will help you answer these questions:

- What is asthma?
- What are the symptoms of asthma?
- What happens in an asthma attack?
- How can you help prevent or reduce asthma symptoms?

What is asthma?

Asthma is a health-condition of the breathing tubes (airways) that makes it hard to breathe. When this happens, it is usually called an asthma attack.

What are the symptoms of asthma?

Someone who has asthma may have:

- Coughing
- Wheezing
- Tight chest
- Shortness of breath, so they are not able to get enough air through the breathing tubes

Your child may have asthma even though he or she does not have all of these symptoms.

- For some children, these symptoms are worse after they run or play.
- For some children, these symptoms get worse at night.
- Symptoms may change over time as your child grows.

What happens in an asthma attack?

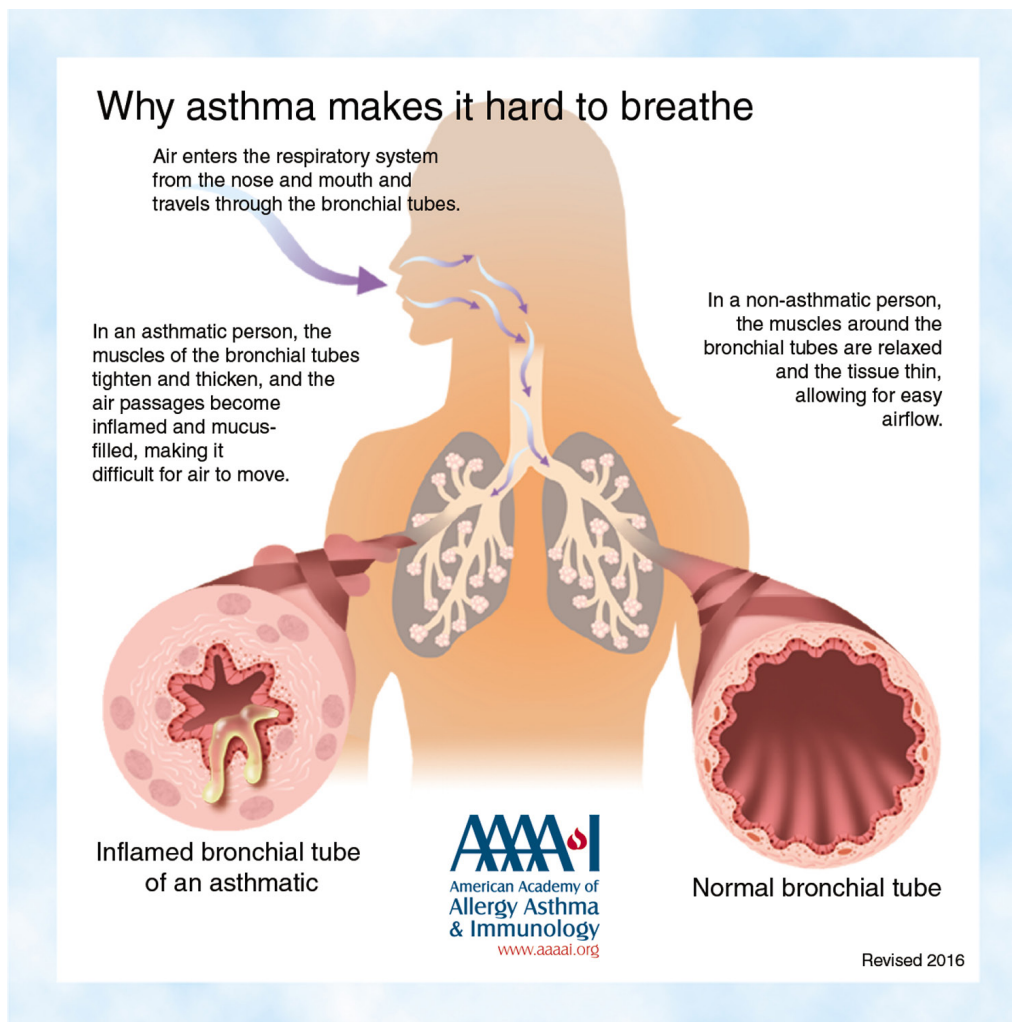
- Muscles around the breathing tubes get tight.
- The inside of the breathing tubes gets swollen and sensitive (inflamed).
- Mucus blocks the breathing tubes and makes it hard to get air in and out.

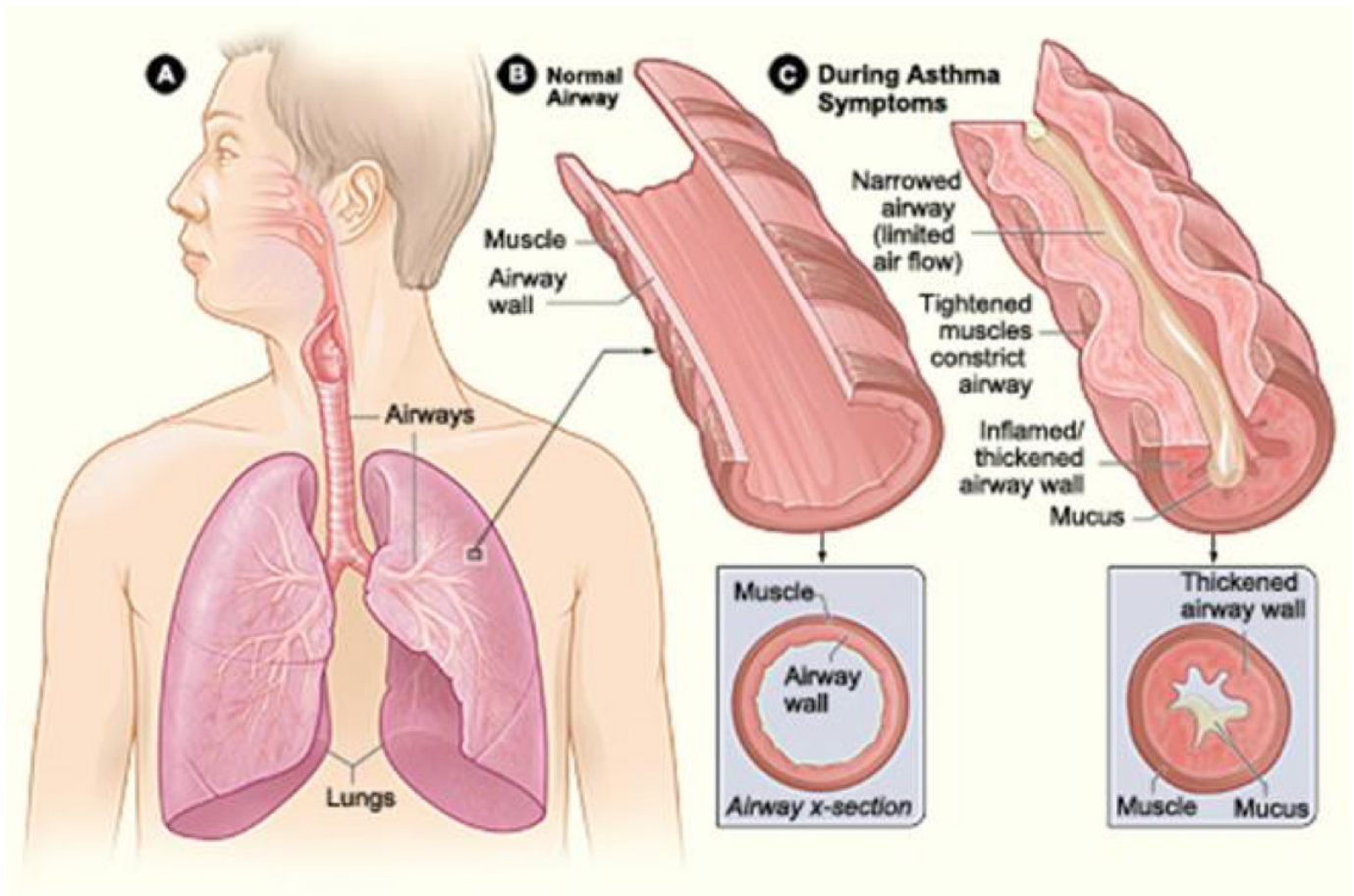
How can you help prevent or reduce asthma attacks? Make sure your child takes all asthma medicine as instructed, even when feeling well.

- Reduce asthma triggers: Know your child's triggers and avoid them as much as possible. Read the handout Asthma Triggers to help you find your child's triggers.
- Hand washing: Make sure your child washes their hands often to help prevent illnesses.
- Get a flu shot: Be sure your child—and the rest of the family—gets a flu shot every year.
- Keep your child's asthma appointments even when well.

In other handouts there is information on:

- Asthma Triggers: What triggers your child's asthma attacks?
- Asthma Medicines: How should you use the medicines your doctor (or other health care provider) gives you to help control your child's asthma?





From the National Heart, Blood and Lung Institute 2014
<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/asthma>