

# You and Your Asthma

Asthma Foundation NSW is committed to understanding and championing the needs of people with asthma. We commissioned the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research to undertake the largest study of its kind in NSW in order to better understand how asthma affects people's lives. Around 700 people participated in the study.



## What we discovered through our research

### Poor asthma control is a problem for many people in NSW

As many as 40% of adults and 38% of children were found to have poorly controlled asthma. This means a person is experiencing frequent asthma symptoms (more than twice a week), waking at night due to asthma, or having limited exercise tolerance due to asthma. Almost everyone with asthma should be able to find the right balance of medications to get their asthma fully under control.

Asthma Foundation NSW was surprised to discover that even people taking regular 'preventer' medications had poorly controlled asthma. Further research is needed to better understand the reason for this, but one possible explanation is that many people are not using their inhaler correctly, which limits the amount of medication getting into their lungs and may reduce the effectiveness of their puffer in an emergency.

Most people with poor inhaler technique are not aware they have a problem. Consumers are advised to ask their doctor or pharmacist to check their inhaler technique, or watch our short films on best-practice inhaler technique at [www.youtube.com/user/asthmansw](http://www.youtube.com/user/asthmansw).

## What you told us you wanted to know:

### 1. What triggers my asthma and how do I avoid these triggers?

A trigger is anything that irritates the airways and makes asthma symptoms worse. Everyone's asthma is different and individuals may have several different triggers. An important aspect of controlling your asthma is identifying and avoiding your triggers to reduce unnecessary symptoms.

- Visit [www.asthmansw.org.au](http://www.asthmansw.org.au) to:
  - Learn more about the A-Z of asthma triggers
  - Subscribe to our free email newsletter 'onAIR' which has a regular feature about asthma triggers
  - Check out the daily pollen count between September and January if pollen is a trigger for you
- Speak to a health professional on our Asthma Information Line 1800 645 130

### 2. What should I do in an asthma attack?

You can live without food for weeks, without water for days but without air for only a few minutes. Knowing what to do in an asthma emergency situation can help save your life, or the life of someone you know and love.

- Are you able to recognise the signs of an asthma attack?
- Would you know what to do if someone in your care had an asthma attack?
- Do you know how to administer asthma medication?

## You and your Asthma continued...

Visit our website to find out what to do during an asthma attack

- Register for a free Asthma Control Pack which includes a first aid magnet and Asthma Emergency Card.
- Book a training course to learn how to manage an asthma emergency in your school, childcare service, workplace, or nursing home (under Programs > Asthma Training)
- Download our First Aid Poster for your workplace, school, gym or sports club (under About Asthma > Asthma Basics > Emergency Asthma Procedures).

### **3. Asthma medications – which ones should I be using, and when?**

There are a number of medications used in the control and management of asthma. Our website gives you information to help you understand the different medications, how they work, and potential side effects you may experience.

- Check our Asthma Medications Reference Chart for up to date, easy to understand information on a wide range of medications (under About Asthma > Medications and Devices).
- Download our Medications and Devices brochure (under About Asthma > Publications > Brochures).
- Register for our free email newsletter 'onAIR' which always has a feature on medications.

### **4. What's being done to support research to help day to day living with asthma, prevention and ultimately a cure for asthma?**

Over the past 44 years, Asthma Foundation NSW has contributed over \$7 million to research in the area of asthma and allergy. This research has helped shape knowledge in areas such as:

- What causes asthma?
- What are the risk factors in the development of asthma?
- What treatments can be used to relieve an asthma attack?
- What medications can be used to prevent asthma symptoms?
- How can exercise induced asthma be avoided?

The Asthma Foundation NSW Research Program today extends beyond research funding. The Foundation actively supports the asthma research community by drawing attention to the need for further research and communicating research outcomes to the wider community via the media and our education programs.

- Read more about the current projects we are funding in 2008 in the Research section at [www.asthmansw.org.au](http://www.asthmansw.org.au)
- Subscribe to our free email newsletter 'onAIR' which usually features an article on the latest in asthma research

### **5. How can I be sure that all the places I go to, or send my child to, have the latest information about asthma and can help if there's an emergency?**

Ensuring that your work colleagues, teachers, coaches, family and friends know you or your child have asthma and what to do if you have an attack, can be critical in an emergency situation. Asthma Foundation NSW offers a range of services to ensure the environments where you and your family work and study are Asthma Friendly.

- Check if your child's school is Asthma Friendly at [www.asthmafriendlyschools.org.au](http://www.asthmafriendlyschools.org.au). If it's not, get the school to register in our Asthma Friendly Schools program. It's free and could save a life.
- Book a training course for our trainers to come and provide your school, childcare service, workplace, or nursing home with the knowledge and skills you need to manage asthma emergencies (under Programs > Asthma Training).
- Download our First Aid Poster for your workplace, school, gym or sports club (under About Asthma > Asthma Basics > Emergency Asthma Procedures).

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