

ASTHMA

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Abstract

Asthma is a condition involving repeated attacks of shortness of breath, wheezing, and coughing. These attacks occur when the airways contract, swell, and clog up with mucus. An attack may last a few minutes or a few hours. In mild cases the attacks occur only occasionally, but people with severe asthma may have several attacks in a week (or even in a single day). Although it's a chronic disease, people with asthma can learn how to manage these attacks and lead normal, active lives.



What causes asthma?

There are two types of asthma: **atopic (extrinsic) asthma** and **nonatopic (intrinsic) asthma**.

The term *atopic*, which means *external*, gives a clue to the cause of this type of asthma. Atopic asthma is a type of allergic reaction. Many people with atopic asthma have other allergies, and there is often a family history of allergies. Common causes are dust, pollen, mold spores, insecticides, animals, and certain food. Atopic asthma usually, but not always, begins in childhood.

Nonatopic asthma typically begins after age 35, and the attacks are more frequent as time goes by. The cause is unknown, but it is believed to be an over-response of the immune system. Viruses (such as the common cold), exercise, emotional stress, or exposure to cold air, dust, or fumes sometimes triggers attacks.

An interesting feature has been noticed that if only the Husband has a history of Asthma, they get daughters but if only wife has a history of Asthma, then they have all sons. But if both of the parents have a history of some of the other allergic diseases in them or their family, then the children born are both sons and daughters.

How is asthma diagnosed?

Unfortunately, no single test can diagnose asthma, and several tests must be performed. The condition is often confused with breathing tract infections, obstruction of the bronchial tubes or throat, and cystic fibrosis. Lung function tests involve breathing into a special machine to evaluate breathing performance. Blood tests are made which often include checking the amount of oxygen in the blood. Drawing a small amount of blood from an artery does this. Sputum is examined under the microscope, and a chest x-ray is made.

Skin tests are usually performed (if they have not been in the past) to identify allergies to common foods or other substances.

Asthma attacks vary greatly in frequency, how long they last, and the symptoms. The attacks can range from occasional periods of wheezing, mild coughing and slight breathlessness to severe attacks that can lead to airway obstruction and total inability to breathe. An attack may begin slowly or abruptly. It is often preceded by an upper respiratory infection. In general, episodes caused by infection begin slowly and last longer. Attacks caused by allergens are sudden and subside quickly if the cause is removed. Typically, an attack begins with shortness of breath, wheezing, and a hacking cough. As secretions increase, breathing out becomes longer. The cough gets deeper and more rattling, and a large quantity of thick sputum is made as the attack lessens. The child appears afraid and speaks in a panting manner.

He or she may assume a bent-over position to breathe easier. A sudden increase in the rate of breathing, repeated hacking, and coughing without sputum mean a lack of air. This is a medical emergency. Children with life-long asthma develop a barrel chest from the continuous hyperventilated state. They usually carry their shoulders high to make better use of the muscles of breathing.

How is asthma treated?

Homoeopathic medicines are used as per the totality of the symptoms.

Most Common medicines preferred in these cases are:

Sl.No.	Medicine	Symptoms
01	IPECAC	Dyspnoea: constant constriction in chest, Cough incessant and violent with every breath, chest seems full of phlegm, Wheezing, Rattling in chest. <Lying down, moist warm wind.
02	ARS.ALB	Dyspnoea: constant constriction in chest, Wheezing, Fears suffocation, Expectoration frothy, Burning heat in chest, Cough < after midnight, lying down, after drinking, cold, Seashore, Wet weather. > Heat, head elevated, Warm Drinks.
03	SAMBUCUS NIGRA Q	Dyspnoea: Suffocative cough on about midnight, Nose obstructed, Cannot Expire, Profuse Sweating < during sleep, after eating fruit > sitting up, motion.
04	ZINGEBER Q	Dyspnoea < towards morning, scratching sensation in throat, Dry cough with stitching in chest.
05	ANTIM TART	Great rattling of mucous but very little is expectorated, Burning sensation in chest, short difficult breathing, feels as if he would suffocate, must sit up, Coughing & gaping consecutively. Cough excited by eating. Dyspnoea > by eructation, lying on right side (Lt. side-Badiaga).
06	LYCOPODIUM	Dyspnoea, Rattling, Neglected pneumonia, Flaying of alae Nasae, Salty expectoration with streaks of blood. <Warm drinks except throat & stomach, after eating seafood.
07	PULSATILLA	Dry cough in evening and night, must sit up in bed to get relief; loose cough in the morning with copious expectoration, Dyspnoea with pressure upon chest < lying left side, rich & fat food, heat. > Open air, motion.
08	CARBO VEG	Dyspnoea <in evening, night, Cold, Fat food, Warm damp weather, Alcohol. Spasmodic cough with burning in chest, Cyanosis; must be fanned.
09	KALI CARB	Dyspnoea > by leaning forward, Warm moist weather, moving about. Whole chest is very sensitive, with stitching pain in chest, wheezing, and cold. Expectoration must be swallowed < 3 AM, Coffee, soup, lying on painful side, coition.
10	STICTA Q	Dyspnoea with dry cough < night, inspiration, facilitates expectoration. Pain in chest from sternum to spinal cord. Asthma after measles < evening, when tired., sudden change in temperature.

Sl.No.	Medicine	Symptoms
11	BLATTA OR	Asthma when associated with bronchitis & when indicated Ars.Alb failed to give permanent relief (Thuja).
12	SENEGA Q	Old Asthmatics with congestive attacks Rattling in chest with difficult raising of mucous, chronic emphysema. Bending head backwards. Pressure on chest as if lungs were forced to spine.
13	NAT SULPH	Dyspnoea during damp weather must hold chest when coughing, rattling in chest < 4AM & 5 AM. Cough with thick greenish expectoration, Pain in Lt. Lower chest. Every fresh cold brings on attack of Asthma. A Constitutional remedy. < Music.
14	THUJA	A constitutional remedy. < cold drinks, night, 3AM & PM, fat, coffee, vaccination
15	MEDORRHINUM	Dyspnoea, cannot exhale > lying on stomach < night, thinking of ailment, heat, seashore, damp weather.
16	SULPHUR	Constitutional remedy. Dyspnoea wants window open, oppression & burning in chest, rattling in chest with greenish yellow purulent sweet mucous > sitting up, dry warm weather. < Night, alcoholic drinks, bathing.

FOR PSYCHOSOMATIC PATIENTS

Sl.No.	Medicine	Symptoms
01	BELLADONA	Superstitious*, laughing while speaking, wanting immediate cure, unconsciousness interrupted by screaming, light desire for**, frivolous***
02	COCCULUS	Recognizes reality and accepts it, cares, worries for others, understands question after repetition, averse of being disturbed.
03	HYOSCYAMUS	Obstinate if demand is not fulfilled break things, bites others. Bad desire always remain in, disbelief, suspicious
04	IGNATIA	Much sighing & sobbing, not communicative, changeable mood, < anger, grief.

*Blind faith.

** Not worth of serious notice.

*** Desire for something with the help of which one can achieve knowledge.

For specific Allergies & Infection the following medicines can be used intercurrently or along with the indicated medicines for quick relief:

1. Dust Allergy: **Bromium, Pothos foetida, Solanum Lycopus, Medorrhinum, Ipecac, Ars.alb. Silicea, Azadirachta Indica.**
2. Seafood: **Lycopodium.**
3. Egg: **Ferrum Met.**
4. Cockroach: **Blatta Or.**
5. Pet Dandruff: **Thuja, Phosphorus.**
6. Change in Temperature: **Sticta Pal, Aralia Racemosa.**
7. Milk: **Urtica Uren**
8. Honey: **Nat. Carb.**
9. Onion: **Thuja**
10. Lemonade: **Selenium, Bell, Cyclame, Cal.Carb, and Eucalyptus.**
11. Sour things, Vinegar: **Ant.Crude.**
12. Spoiled meat, fish: **Carbo Veg.**
13. Potato: **Alumina.**
14. Sugar, Sugarcane: **Saccharum off., Sulphur**
15. Wine: **Chloralum , Syphilinum**
16. Cabbage: **Petroleum, Iodium**
17. Hair dyes: **Natrum Mur, Allium cepa, Euphrasia, Sabadilla.**
18. Chocolate: **Sulphur.**
19. Post Tonsillectomy Throat Infection: **Streptococcin.**
20. Wool: **Hepar Sulph**
21. Strong Odors: **Sangunaria Can.**
22. Pollens: **Penthorum, Aspedosperma** and **Aralia Racemosa** & Succinic Acid.
23. Humidity: **Dulcamara, Nat.Sulph, Aranea Diad,** and **Thuja.**
24. After measles: **Carbo Veg, Sangu.Can,** and **Sticta.**
25. After vaccination: **Ant.Tart, Thuja, Malandrinum,** and **Silica.**
26. Steroid dependent: **Prednisolone, Cortisone, China,** and **Pulsatilla.**
27. Reoccurring Infection: **Streptomycin.**

Vibronic preparations like **Cold Cough & Asthma 30, Allergy Balance and Lung & Chest Balance** are very useful in treating the disease.

Management Techniques

People who have asthma are wise to learn what triggers an attack and to avoid that item or situation is the best method of prevention.

If you have asthma, your doctor will recommend self-management techniques to help prevent attacks. For instance:

- See your Doctor regularly.
- Take your preventive medicines exactly as prescribed.
- Do not smoke. Avoid people who smoke cigarettes, cigars and pipes, as tobacco smoke can trigger asthma attacks.
- If you are overweight, talk to your Doctor. Obesity often can complicate asthma.
- Know your triggers -- the things and events that cause you to have asthma attacks.
- Reduce your exposure to allergens.
- Take your medications exactly as directed, even when you are feeling well and have no asthma symptoms.

Avoid allergens:

Many people with asthma have allergy problems. Sometimes reducing your exposure to allergens may help you manage your asthma. If you have allergy problems, you may want to consult your health care provider for allergy testing. You also can take the following steps to avoid allergens apart from taking specific Homeopathic Medicines regularly:

IN YOUR HOME:

- Use mite-proof pillowcases.
- Wipe down or vacuum your mattress and pillow covers at least once a week.
- Avoid feather pillows and quilts. Use polyester-fill pillows.
- Cover your windows with washable curtains and shades. Blinds can gather dust.
- Clean your shades weekly.
- If possible, avoid or remove wall-to-wall carpeting. Wash any throw rugs in hot water once a week.
- Store shoes, off-season clothing and other items in plastic containers with lids that are easy to dust.
- Damp dust and mop your house weekly.
- Wear a dust mask when vacuuming or ask someone else to vacuum.
- Eliminate houseplants -- they gather dust and mold.
- If mold is a problem in your house, use a room dehumidifier. Do not use vaporizers or humidifiers. Also, remove wallpaper, as mold can grow underneath it.
- Keep your windows and doors closed during pollen season. If possible, use an air conditioner instead. If you use an air conditioner, check it regularly for mold.

IN YOUR HOME (Continued):

- Change the filter in your home air conditioner or furnace at least once a month.
- Use a bleach solution to kill mold and mildew in bathrooms and kitchens. **(Note -- make sure that cleaning areas are properly ventilated).**
- Control cockroaches and other pests, such as rodents. You might be allergic to debris left behind by pests.
- Keep pets out of your bedroom. If possible, make your pets outdoor pets or find new homes for them.

Outdoors:

- Stay indoors in the morning, as pollen levels are highest before 10 a.m.
- Monitor air quality via radio, television and newspapers, which often run listings of the pollen and mold levels.
- If you can, avoid outdoor chores that stir up pollen, such as mowing the lawn and raking leaves
- Drive with the windows closed.

What to do About an Asthma Attack?

Asthma attacks usually give you warning signs before they start. This give you time to "short circuit" the attack, but you must take immediate action. Go into action as soon as any of the warning signs appear like tightness in your chest, coughing, wheezing, dyspnoea (difficulty breathing), or shortness of breath.

Relax and breathe slowly: It takes a few minutes for the medication to completely open your airways. In the meantime, it's important that you try to relax, because fear and anxiety add to the shortness of breath. Do your pursed lip breathing until you no longer feel breathless. (Don't gasp for air! That only makes it worse.) Here are two relaxation techniques to help you keep calm and slow your breathing:

Tension-relaxation exercise. Sit in a chair with your eyes closed, doing your pursed lip breathing for a minute or so. Now tighten the muscles in your forehead (frown as if you're furious!), hold it for 3 seconds, and relax those muscles. Next tighten the muscles in your lower face (clench your jaw in determination), hold it for 3 seconds, and relax. Now you're ready to tighten-relax your arms and hands, then your buttocks, then your legs and feet. After that, let your entire body go limp and feel how relaxed your muscles are.

Visualization. Sit in a chair with your eyes closed, doing your pursed lip breathing for a minute or so. Now imagine the most peaceful scene you can think of--perhaps a calm lake, mountaintop at sunset, floating clouds, or whatever especially appeals to you. Visualize the scene, with you in it, in as much detail as possible. Repeat to yourself how relaxing it is to be in that place and how easily you can breathe there. For example, you might tell yourself, "The air is so sweet and fresh here. Every time I breathe, the air cleanses my lungs and I can breathe more easily."

Cough effectively: Asthma attacks sometimes trigger a coughing spell. This is actually good, because it brings up mucus and helps clear your airways. But you need to be sure the coughing is effective. To do this, keep your feet on the floor and lean forward slightly. Breathe in deeply and hold it for 2 or 3 seconds.

Cough to loosen the mucus. Cough again to bring the mucus up, spitting it into a tissue. **(Don't swallow mucus because this can cause nausea.)**

Diet: Avoid those foods, which contain Moulds, **or Sulphites**, Processed foods, Foods contains Histamine.

Drugs: Some Allopathic Medicines used in High Blood Pressure like Betablockers (Ciplar, Inderal etc.) and Aspirin also precipitate an Asthma attack. Even in many cases Betablockers create Idiopathic Asthma.

Asthma in children

It usually begins between 3 and 8 years of age. Asthma in children is usually caused by an allergy to a foreign substance (allergen), as pollen, mold, house dust, certain foods, animal hair and skin, feathers, insects, smoke, and various chemicals or drugs. In infants, especially those born into a family with a history of allergic reactions, food allergy is a common cause. In some instances, the attacks are caused by other events, as infection or swelling, obstruction by a foreign body, physical stress resulting from weakness, exposure to cold air, or psychological stress. Such cases are classified as non-allergic, or intrinsic, asthma. There is a strong hereditary factor associated with the disease. As many as 75% of children with asthma have a family history of the disorder.

The child usually has other allergic symptoms, as hay fever, eczema, or skin eruptions (urticaria). The disease occurs twice as often in boys as in girls before puberty. Both boys and girls are affected equally during adolescence. Medicines as indicted as per the totality of symptoms will yield good results.

Failure to stop an acute attack results in Status Asthmaticus. This is a serious prolonged state needing hospitalization.

CONCLUSION

In children Homoeopathy is able to give permanent relief with the help of above stated remedies. Some times in emergency **nebulisation** is required to overcome acute attack of Asthma for which don't feel shy to ask your Allopathic colleague for help.

In old cases wherein patients were treated with steroids, the duration of treatment is sometimes up to five years. In such cases with Homoeopathic remedies sometime help of Allopathic colleagues are required, to overcome acute Exacerbation of Asthma attacks.

Warning

The above given information of the disease is for the general awareness for the commoners. Homoeopathic medicines should not be taken without the proper guidance of qualified and registered Homoeopathic physician.