Classifications of asthma
Asthma is classified by the severity of your symptoms, which may include difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness, and coughing.

Intermittent asthma: Asthma is considered intermittent if the following are true without any treatment:

» Occurs fewer than two days a week.
» Doesn’t interfere with normal activities.
» Nighttime symptoms occur fewer than two days a month.

Mild persistent asthma: Asthma is considered mild persistent if the following are true without any treatment:

» Symptoms occur more than two days a week, but do not occur every day.
» Attacks interfere with daily activities.
» Nighttime symptoms occur 3–4 times a month.

Moderate persistent asthma: Asthma is considered moderate persistent if the following are true without any treatment:

» Symptoms occur daily.
» Inhaled short-acting asthma medication is used daily.
» Symptoms interfere with daily activities.
» Nighttime symptoms occur more than once a week, but do not happen every day.

Severe persistent asthma: Asthma is considered severe persistent if the following are true without any treatment:

» Symptoms occur daily.
» Symptoms severely limit daily activities.
» Nighttime symptoms occur often, almost every night.

Treatment
Everyone with asthma does not take the same medicine. Some medicines can be inhaled or taken as a pill. Asthma medicines are available in two forms—quick-relief and long-term control.

Quick-relief medicines control the symptoms of an asthma attack. If you need to use your quick-relief medicine more frequently, you should visit your health care provider to see if a different medicine will work better for you.

Long-term control medicines help decrease asthma attacks and can make them milder. This medicine doesn’t help you if you’re already having an asthma attack, so be sure to take your medicine even when you’re not experiencing symptoms.

Asthma management
Remember—you can control your asthma. With help from your doctor, create an asthma management plan, so that you know what to do if you or a loved one has an asthma attack. Then, decide who should have a copy of your plan and the best place to store it in the home.

With the combination of self-care and a treatment plan, you can achieve the best results in controlling your asthma and living your life to the fullest.

For more information on controlling your asthma:

Asthma Case Manager
Phone: 800-333-5003
Hours: Monday–Friday 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This brochure contains information that may help you deal with asthma. It is intended for informational purposes only and should not be considered medical advice. Please consult your doctor for a proper diagnosis and treatment of asthma.

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**What is asthma?**
Asthma is a chronic disease that affects the lungs leading to inflamed and narrow airways. Typically, the airways to the lungs are fully open when we breathe, so air can move freely in and out. People with asthma have highly sensitive airways that become inflamed and narrow easily leading to cough, chest tightness, and difficulty breathing.

**What is an asthma attack?**
An asthma attack takes place in your body’s airways, which are the pathways that carry air to your lungs. These airways become smaller and narrower, and the mucus created by your body clogs up the airways even more. This leads to increased coughing, chest tightness, wheezing, and trouble breathing.

**Causes of asthma**
*In most cases,* the cause of asthma is unknown and there is currently no known cure. However, if someone in your family has asthma, you are more likely to develop this chronic disease.

**Asthma attack triggers**
- **Tobacco smoke**
  Smoking and secondhand smoke can trigger symptoms of asthma and lead to an asthma attack. If you have asthma, smoke, and wish to quit, Arise offers smoking cessation tools for our members through our free Wellness Program.
- **Dust mites**
  Dust mites are tiny bugs that are in almost every home. To prevent attacks, use mattress and pillowcase covers to create a barrier between dust mites and yourself. Avoid using down-filled pillows, quilts, or comforters, because dust mites tend to thrive in these environments.
- **Smoke from burning wood or grass**
  Try to avoid burning wood in your home if possible. If a wildfire is causing poor air quality in your area, pay attention to air-quality forecasts on the radio, television, or internet and plan your activities accordingly.
- **Pets**
  If you think your furry pet might be causing your asthma attacks, try to keep your pet out of your bedroom. In addition, giving your pet a weekly bath along with regular vacuuming will decrease the chances of having an asthma attack.
- **Outdoor air pollution**
  Outdoor air pollution can come from factories, automobiles, and other sources. Try to plan your outdoor activities for when air pollution levels will be low.
- **Mold**
  Eliminate mold in your home and take steps to keep it from growing. Humidity, which is the amount of moisture in the air, makes mold grow, so invest in an air conditioner or dehumidifier to help keep the humidity level low in your home. Purchase a small tool called a hygrometer to check humidity levels and keep them as low as possible—no higher than 50%. Humidity levels change throughout the day, so check the levels more than once a day. Fix water leaks right away, because mold can grow behind walls and under floors.
- **Other triggers:**
  - Influenza (flu), colds, sinus infections, allergies, acid reflux, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) infections
  - Breathing in some chemicals or cold, dry air
  - Certain medicines, food additives, and fragrances
  - Burning incense or candles
  - Hyperventilation, caused by fast breathing from strong emotions and physical exercise
  - Bad weather, such as thunderstorms or high humidity