

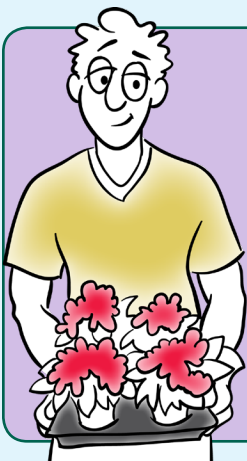
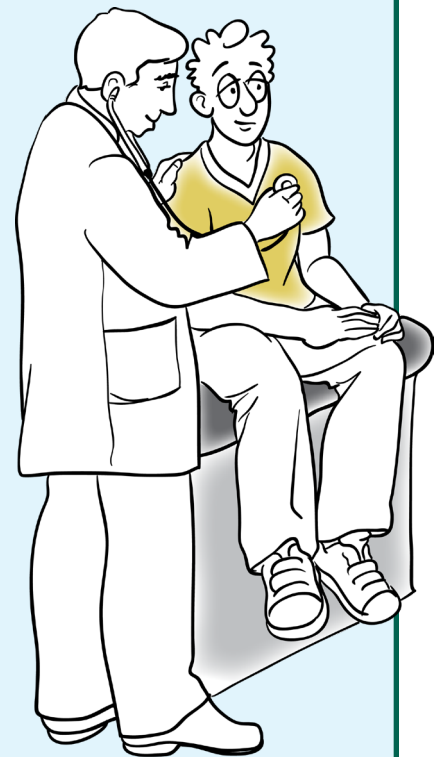
## Asthma on the Rise

The number of people with asthma continues to rise. In 2001, nearly 20 million people had asthma, and now, this condition, which causes chronic inflammation of the lung airways and makes it hard to breathe (much like pinching a straw and trying to breathe through it), affects 26 million Americans.

As temperatures rise and you head outside for activities, you become exposed to more common asthma attack triggers. These include exposure to allergens such as ragweed and pollen, irritants in the air such as smoke and chemical fumes, or extreme weather conditions such as extremely dry air. Exercise or illness (especially respiratory illnesses) can also make you more susceptible.

Though most common among children, adults too can develop asthma. It is important to visit your family physician if you think you or your child are experiencing any symptoms (shortness of breath or breathlessness, tightness in the chest, wheezing) as it could be something even more serious, such as the progressive chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

As with many other conditions, the sooner the condition is caught, the better. Your doctor may ask you a series of questions regarding your symptoms and the duration of those symptoms, as well as listen to the function of your lungs. The good thing is that asthma can be controlled with the right precautions and doctor-led medications.



## A Breath of Fresh Air

Managing asthma is important to breathe well, stay active, and keep symptoms at bay.

- Identify your triggers and avoid them. If you're still trying to identify your triggers, keep a diary of your attacks to narrow down possible triggers.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes.
- Avoid restaurants that are smoky, or allow smoking close by.
- Asthma increases the chance of complications from the flu. Receiving an annual flu vaccine can reduce risks.
- Allergies can worsen asthma symptoms. Keep a clean home, free of dust and avoid going outside when pollen pollution is high. It is also advised to keep windows and doors shut to keep the pollen out.

SOURCES: Cleveland Clinic, WebMD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention