

## Asthma#Causes and Concerns

Why is asthma found more commonly in the western world? What causes asthma? Why do some people develop asthma while others don't?

Asthma is a chronic lung condition that is characterized by difficulty in breathing. People with asthma have extra sensitive and/or hyper-responsive airways. During an asthma attack, their airways become irritated for one of several reasons, and react by narrowing and constricting. This causes increased resistance to airflow, and obstructs the flow of the air passages to and from the lungs. It becomes hard to breathe.

Asthma is not a contagious condition. You cannot catch asthma from another person. You can, however, inherit the asthma tendency from your parents, although people with asthma should not worry about their future children unless they have a severe form, in which case, discuss it with your doctor.

Smoking and asthma

Studies show that children whose parents smoke are twice as likely to develop asthma as children of parents that do not. Also, children whose mothers smoked during pregnancy tend to be born with smaller airways, which greatly increases their chance of developing this disease.

Researchers believe that the "westernized" environment and lifestyle of developed countries has a lot to do with the chances of whether a person will develop asthma or not. For example, many people believe that air pollution has something to do with asthma, although the evidence, at this stage, is surprisingly very weak.

Known causes of asthma include allergies to house dust mites, dogs, cats, and molds.

Childhood infections and exposure to substances from bacteria caused by a dirty environment seem to protect against allergies, and this seems to be the main reason why richer populations have more allergic disease.

The causes of asthma are complicated. They include our genes, exposure to things we become allergic to, and a general effect of our environment on the chance that these genes and the things we become allergic to will cause trouble at some time during our lives. However, it is not quite as complicated as it sounds.

Allergies and asthma

Almost all asthma in young people is caused by allergies. This means that if you have asthma you probably inherited genes which make it possible for you to get asthma, plus have allergy-producing things in your environment, such as house dust mites, cats, or dogs. The allergies and the genes are the causes of developing asthma, because if either of them were not present you would not developed asthma.

But what about colds, laughter, exercise, or tobacco smoke, which can give you an attack of asthma even if everything in the last paragraph is true for you?

You can't cure your asthma by not exercising, or by not laughing. Quite simply, these are not causes of the fact that you have asthma, though they can be causes of the fact that you have an asthma attack.

The type of interior house paint you use can apparently make asthma worse. The glossy oil paints used for home decorating can bring on asthma attacks in asthma sufferers. The good news is that emulsion paints don't seem to cause this to occur.

Polyurethane paints, usually recognizable because they come in two packs that need to be mixed together before use, can cause occupational asthma in people who use them regularly. However, they probably don't cause much risk in people with asthma who use them infrequently. As always, when using chemicals and paints, it is a good idea to ventilate the area well during and after use.

Many things can make your asthma worse, but not all these things are causes. You may not be able to cure your asthma by knowing its causes, but the knowledge can certainly help you to avoid an attack. As more research becomes available on causes and areas of concern for asthma sufferers, we will report on it here.