

# Asthma Attacks: Recognition and Management

## About Asthma Attacks



- Asthma is characterised by **day-to-day variation in symptoms**
- When a person's symptoms **progressively worsen** over time and lung function decreases, this is called an asthma attack, exacerbation or flare-up.
- Worsening may occur quickly (over minutes or hours) but more often over several days or even weeks.

## Triggers

- viral or bacterial infection
- allergen exposure
- work-related factors
- stress
- poor adherence to inhaled preventer therapy



Attacks can occur in people with allergic rhinitis - with or without a history of asthma - who are allergic to rye grass pollen, during a 'thunderstorm asthma' event

## Maternal Risk Factors for an Asthma Attack



Moderate / severe asthma



Cigarette smoking



Older age



Obesity



Given birth 2 or more times



Depression / anxiety

Management of exacerbations of asthma in pregnancy should be the same as for other adults, including the use of oral corticosteroids if needed

## Signs and Symptoms of an Asthma Attack

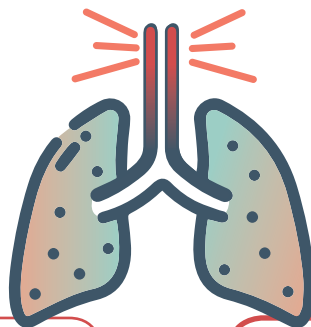
The signs of an asthma attack include any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing
- Inability to speak full sentences
- Cough or wheeze
- Reliever medication not working as normal or symptoms returning quickly



Follow the instructions on your Written Asthma Action Plan. If you don't have a plan, proceed with Asthma First Aid.

**Call Ambulance on Triple Zero (000) if no improvement**



Severe / life threatening signs include any of the following:

- Inability to speak
- Confusion and exhaustion
- Chest pain or tightness
- Tugging in of skin between the ribs and at the base of the neck
- Dangerously low oxygen
- Unconsciousness



**Call Ambulance on Triple Zero (000)**  
Follow the instructions on your Written Asthma Action Plan. If you don't have a plan, proceed with Asthma First Aid.

Asthma attacks can be quite frightening and should be treated seriously, by immediately taking **reliever medications** and seeking medical assistance

A **written asthma action plan** should include details on actions to take during an asthma attack and when to go to the hospital.

If you have had an asthma attack, arrange a full review of your asthma with your doctor.

## ASTHMA FIRST AID ADVICE

click or scan



asthma.org.au