

## HOW DOES ASTHMA AFFECT YOU?



Photo: Kong

Source: Photocase

### DEAR PATIENT,

Even harmless irritants induce a strong immune response in asthma sufferers. This results in inflammation of the bronchi in the lungs. They become narrower. This, in turn, leads to breathlessness which can be life-threatening in extreme cases. This leaflet contains important information on bronchial asthma.

### ▶ ASTHMA TRIGGERS

There are many different triggers for the inflammatory swelling of the airways:

- **Allergens**  
are substances that prompt an allergic reaction in human beings. Allergens are the most frequent cause of asthma during childhood and adolescence.
- **Viruses and bacteria**  
lead first to an infection and then to asthmatic disorders. Asthma is very frequently triggered by infections of the airways, particularly in babies and infants.
- **Irritants**  
that you inhale at home, when on-the-go or in places that you frequently visit. Examples of irritants are polluted air or tobacco smoke.
- **Feelings**  
like joy, fear, sadness or other emotions can trigger or exacerbate the symptoms of asthma.

### ▶ NECESSARY EXAMINATIONS

Asthma and its triggers are diagnosed in various examinations:

- consultation and physical examination,
- measurement of lung function,
- allergy tests.

### ▶ TREATMENT

Treatment is based on the patient's observations and the examination results. The medicines administered are usually inhaled.

Medicines that inhibit the constant hyper-reactivity of the airways to inflammation in the long term are intended to prevent disorders. They are called long-acting medicines. In this context cortisone is particularly well suited for inhalation.

Standby medicines, which quickly open up the airways in the lungs, are used to offer rapid relief. Fast-acting beta-mimetics are particularly well suited.

In emergencies these medicines are administered as sprays or sometimes in a nebuliser. Furthermore, cortisone tablets can be taken in an emergency.

### ▶ GRADUATED TREATMENT PLAN

The graduated plan for the medicinal treatment of asthma is oriented towards the severity of the disease and how well it is controlled. Treatment is given in various stages. There is a graduated treatment plan for children and adolescents and a separate one for adults.

### ▶ WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Avoid asthma triggers.
- Monitor the course of your own disease or that of your child.
- Learn how to use medicines and inhalers.
- Take your medicines regularly.
- Measure and record the peak expiratory flow value. (The peak expiratory flow value indicates the speed at which a person can exhale air from his/her lungs.)

- Learn breathing techniques (pursed lip breathing).
- Learn body positions that facilitate breathing (coachman's position, goalkeeper's position).
- Attend an asthma training course.
- Play sports and keep moving.
- Keep an eye on yourself:  
Pay special attention to infections of the airways.
- Do not smoke.

You can attend an asthma management programme (DMP asthma). The goal is to co-ordinate care by your family doctor and specialists. Talk to your doctor about this option.

### ▶ MORE INFORMATION

**This Patient Information is based on the latest scientific findings and sums up the most important points from the Patient Guideline "Asthma".**

#### Other useful links

Patient Guideline "Asthma":

[www.versorgungsleitlinien.de/patienten](http://www.versorgungsleitlinien.de/patienten)

Self-help organisations and co-operation partners involved in the Patient Guideline:

[www.patienten-information.de/patientenbeteiligung/selbsthilfe](http://www.patienten-information.de/patientenbeteiligung/selbsthilfe)

[www.azq.de/pf](http://www.azq.de/pf)

#### Self-help contact

You can find out from NAKOS (national contact and information office for the encouragement and support of self-help groups) where there is a self-help group in your area: [www.nakos.de](http://www.nakos.de), Tel.: 030 3101 8960

#### Patient Guidelines

Patient Guidelines translate the treatment recommendations in medical guidelines into everyday language that can be understood by ordinary people. They provide important background information on the causes, examination methods and treatment of a disease. The BÄK (German Medical Association), the KBV (National Associations of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians) and the AWMF (Association of Scientific Medical Societies) working group co-ordinate the programme for the development of medical guidelines ("National Disease Management Guidelines") and the respective patient versions.

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Responsible for the content:

German Agency for Quality in Medicine (ÄZQ)

Joint institution of BÄK and KBV

Tel.: 030 4005-2500 • Fax: 030 4005-2555

E-Mail/Ansprechpartner: [mail@patinfo.org](mailto:mail@patinfo.org)

[www.patinfo.org](http://www.patinfo.org)

[www.aezq.de](http://www.aezq.de)

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