

Asthma

- a. Definition: Asthma is known as reactive airway disease and is defined as a chronic lung condition with inflammation (swelling) of the airways, increased sensitivity of the airways to a variety of things that make asthma worse and obstruction of airflow.
- b. Signs and symptoms:
 - Increased shortness of breath or wheezing that can be heard by others around you
 - Waking up at night caused by wheezing, shortness of breath or coughing
 - Chest tightness or pain
 - Needing bronchodilators more than usual (short acting, rescue medicines)
 - A decrease in normal peak flow rates as measured by a peak flow meter
 - Coughing, especially if the cough is frequent and occurs in spasms
- c. Treatment options
 - Bronchodilators – short or long acting medicines that open up tightened airways and provide temporary relief of symptoms.
 - Anti-inflammatory medicines – the mainstay medicines taken daily to prevent asthma attacks. They work by reducing inflammation in your airways and preventing blood vessels from producing extra mucus in the airway tissue.
 - Allergy shots – may help prevent attacks by making you less sensitive to the allergens that cause the attack.
- d. Links –
 - National Jewish Hospital
 - Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, www.aafa.org
 - American Lung Association, www.lungusa.org
 - National Asthma Education and Prevention Program NHLBI Information Center, www.nhlbi.nih.gov