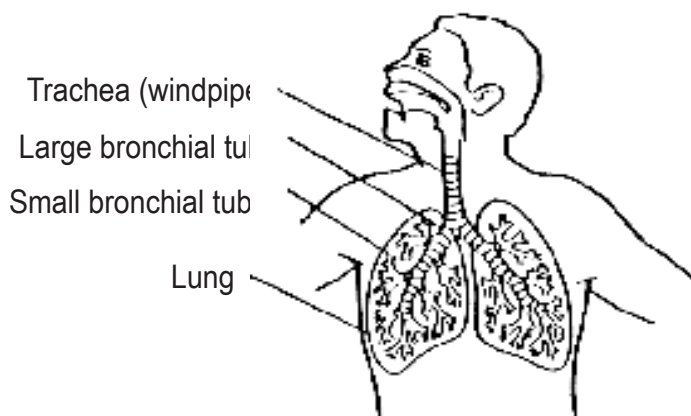


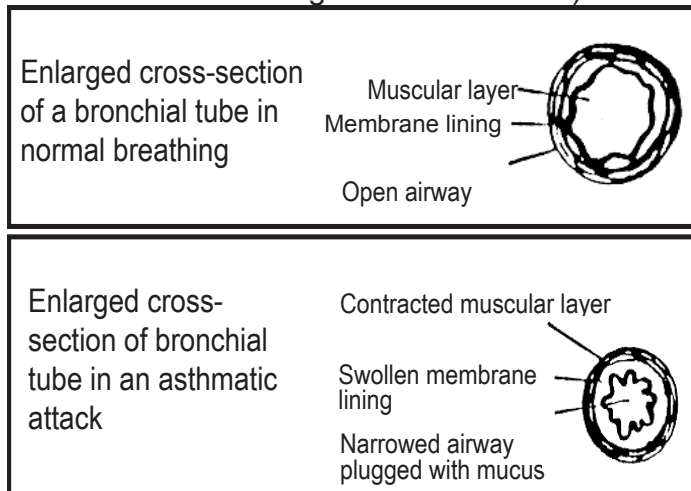
What is Asthma?

Asthma is a respiratory condition affecting over 900,000 Americans. Asthma affects your ability to breathe. The bronchial tubes allow air to flow in and out of the lungs.



When asthma occurs:

1. The lining of the bronchi becomes swollen and narrowed.
2. There is a build-up of mucus within the bronchi
3. The muscles surrounding the bronchi tighten.
4. The air going through the narrowed bronchial tubes causes wheezing (this is the whistling sound heard during an asthma attack).



Asthma is a long-term condition that varies in severity from mild to very severe. Although there is no cure for asthma, asthmatics may improve as they get older. Medicines prescribed by the doctor will help to prevent or relieve the symptoms of asthma. Asthma may appear at any age. The presence of allergies and/or frequent bronchial infections is common among persons experiencing asthma. The tendency to develop asthma is probably inherited.

Precipitating Factors:

Asthma is a condition in which the bronchial tubes are overly sensitive to a number of different factors. These include:

1. Allergies
 - a. Inhalants (substances in the air) - such as dust, molds, animal danders, feathers, pollens, chemicals, kapok, and cottonseeds. These are the most common allergenic substances.
 - b. Foods - mainly a problem in young children
2. Irritants - cigarette smoke, smog, strong odors, fumes, sprays
3. Respiratory infections
4. Weather changes
5. Exercise - particularly running
6. Emotions

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Symptoms:

When an asthma attack occurs, breathing becomes difficult. In a severe attack, the patient's ability to breathe may be blocked to a great extent. It is important to be aware of the early symptoms of an asthma attack in order to take prompt corrective action:

1. Dry cough
2. A tightening in the chest (felt by some, but not by all individuals)
3. A high pitched wheezing sound (especially as the asthmatic breathes out)
4. Rapid breathing

Managing an Attack:

There are many things that the patient and members of the family can do to relieve the symptoms and reduce the severity of an asthma attack. Your doctor may prescribe medicines to relieve the symptoms of asthma. Some asthma medications are taken when the early signs of an attack occur, while others may be continued when symptoms are present. Medicines prescribed by your doctor should be taken as directed. It is best to take these medicines only (do not supplement with over the counter medications).

Increasing the amount of clear liquids helps to thin out the mucus and improve the patient's ability to breathe. It is important to keep the patient calm during an attack. If there are any questions or concerns about how to manage a patient during an attack, your doctor should be contacted. Patients and medical providers need to take an active role in the management of the asthma. "Teamwork" can result in less frequent and less severe attacks.

The team consists of:

- Patient - daily management
- Doctor - routine check-ups, medications, emergency treatment
- Nurse - reinforces doctors' instructions, administers some treatment
- Friends and family members - supportive role

Prevention:

1. When allergenic substances are related to asthma, these substances SHOULD BE AVOIDED if possible. This avoidance may prevent or reduce asthma attacks.
 - All pets should be kept outdoors (except fish).
 - Put plastic covers on feather pillows or replace with dacron pillows.
 - In the patient's room, wash down walls and bare floors regularly to eliminate dust.
 - Eliminate dust catching stuffed animals, curtains and rugs.
 - Eliminate allergic-related foods from the diet.
 - Avoid vacuuming in the presence of the patient.
2. Allow smoking only outdoors and away from the patient.
3. Avoid spray containers (hair spray, deodorant, perfume).
4. Avoid strenuous exercises when symptoms are present.
5. Take asthma and allergy medications as directed.
6. Drink plenty of fluids.
7. Get plenty of rest.
8. Contact the doctor when respiratory infections occur (unless very mild).

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS _____
