



Asthma is a common condition that is not always simple to understand. People experience different symptoms, levels of severity, and triggers. Anyone can get asthma and it can start at any time of life.

What is asthma?

When you breathe, air travels into your lungs through your airways. People with asthma have over-sensitive airways which react to triggers that don't affect other people. These triggers cause airways to tighten, partially close up, swell inside and make more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe in and even harder to breathe out.

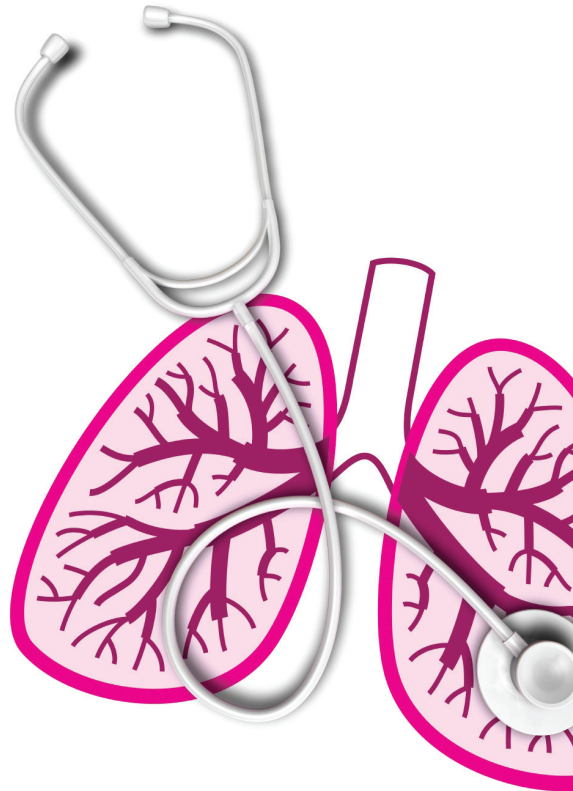
Triggers

A trigger is something that makes asthma worse or brings on an attack. Triggers are different for everyone.

Some common triggers include:

- colds and flu
- cigarette smoke
- certain plants
- cats and other furry animals
- weather changes
- house dust mites
- physical activity
- emotions.

New Zealand has one of the highest rates of asthma in the world.





Symptoms

Symptoms may occur suddenly as an 'asthma attack' or they may be constant. Sufferers may experience one of these symptoms or a combination of them.

Many people with asthma also have hayfever or eczema, and a family history of these conditions.

Symptoms of asthma include:

- coughing, particularly at night and after exercise
- breathlessness
- wheezing (noisy breathing)
- a tight feeling in the chest.

Asthma facts

The word asthma comes from the ancient Greek word for '**panting attack**'.

An estimated **600,000** New Zealanders have asthma, including about one in four children.

Asthma is the most common reason for kiwi kids being admitted to hospital.

Asthma cannot be cured, although asthma sufferers may have 'good' times in their lives when it appears to have gone away. Most of the time people find they can manage their condition, and with the right information, education and attitude, they can go about day-to-day life without symptoms.

