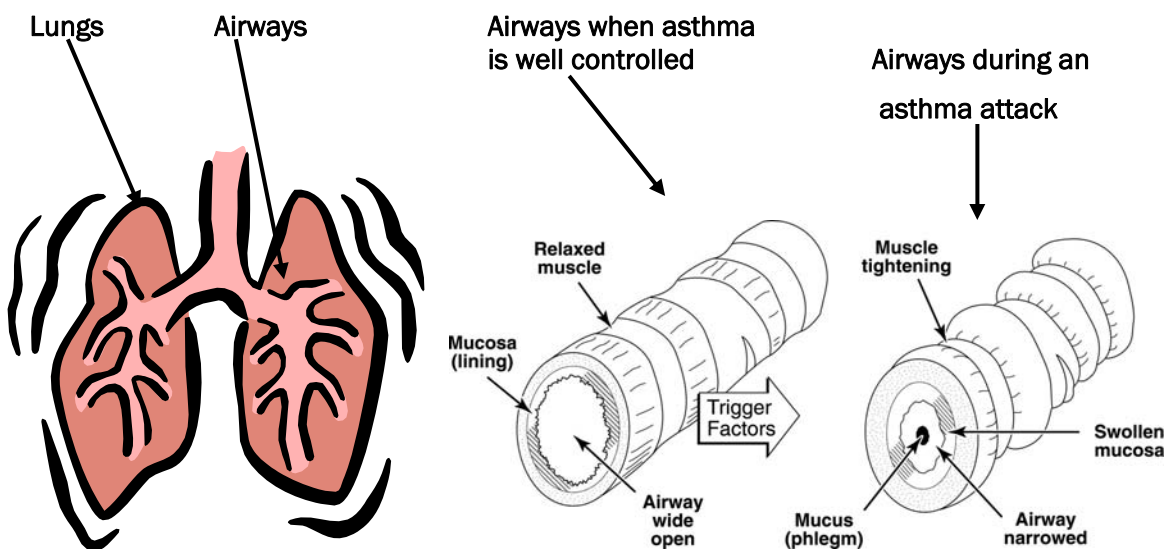


Fact Sheet

What is asthma?

- Asthma is a breathing problem that affects one in nine children in Australia.
- Asthma can be managed effectively but there is no known cure.
- Children with asthma have sensitive or “twitchy” airways in their lungs.
- When exposed to certain trigger factors, these sensitive airways react causing them to narrow inside. This narrowing is due to inflammation and swelling inside the airways, tightening of the muscles around the airways, and an increased production of mucous (phlegm).
- Common asthma symptoms include shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, and a feeling of tightness in the chest.



(Adapted version of Airway illustration, Prince of Wales Hospital Dept Respiratory Medicine,)

Asthma in Young Children

The symptom of wheezing is very common in children in the first few years of life. Wheezing (a whistling sound heard when breathing out), caused by a narrowing of the lower airways in asthma, can also be due to a number of other things. Children who have wheezing episodes when they have an upper respiratory tract viral infection (common cold) do not necessarily have “classical asthma”. These children are often well in between the viral infections, do not have a history of allergy, and may not go on to have asthma into adulthood. However, as most children under the age of 6 years will have between 6 -10 upper respiratory tract infections a year, this group of children may be susceptible to many episodes of wheeze, cough and breathlessness. These episodes will require asthma medications to treat them.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional
to make sure this information is right for your child.

This document was reviewed on 29th July 2010.

the
children's
hospital at Westmead

 **SYDNEY
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