

# Asthma and Allergy Fast Facts



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for free resources about asthma and allergy.

  
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# Fast Facts

## Asthma and Allergy

- 1** Allergy plays an important role in asthma, as it is one of the key factors that can cause asthma and make it worse. There are two main ways in which allergy affects asthma:
  - Allergy itself can produce the allergic inflammation in the airways.
  - Exposure to one or more allergens can directly trigger an asthma attack.
- 2** Allergy is very common in Australia and New Zealand, affecting around 20% of people. Asthma is also common, affecting around 10% of people. Asthma triggers include allergens, infections, exercise, cold air, changes in temperature and cigarette smoke. Around 80% of people with asthma have positive tests to allergens.
- 3** An allergic reaction occurs when a person's immune system reacts to substances (allergens), that do not affect most people. This leads to inflammation (redness and swelling), and to the following conditions:
  - Allergic rhinitis (hay fever)
  - Eczema or urticaria (hives)
  - Allergies to food, drugs, insects, ticks and other allergens
  - Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction)
  - Asthma
- 4** People with asthma experience a narrowing of the airways in the lungs which obstructs breathing. Narrowing of airways can be reversed using medications. Most people with asthma can lead normal, active lives, if they take regular preventer medication.
- 5** In some people, pollen allergens can directly trigger asthma as well as allergic rhinitis. For example, in thunderstorm asthma, very small pollen granules are released, which can be breathed directly into the airways of the lungs and trigger asthma attacks.
- 6** If you know that allergy and specific allergens trigger your asthma or make it worse:
  - Try to avoid, remove or minimise exposure to confirmed allergens, if possible.
  - If you wheeze in spring or summer, see your doctor as you may be at risk of thunderstorm asthma.
  - Ensure that your allergic rhinitis is treated, as untreated allergic rhinitis can make asthma worse.
  - Be prepared for emergency treatment of anaphylaxis if you have asthma and severe food allergies.

**More information:** [www.allergy.org.au/patients/asthma-and-allergy](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/asthma-and-allergy)

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