

Get to Know Your Body: Recognizing Asthma Symptoms

Asthma symptoms vary for each person. Symptoms occur when the airway tightens, becomes inflamed or fills with mucus and range from mild to severe with each attack. Some symptoms occur frequently while others only happen at specific times, such as during exercise or viral infections like colds or flu.

Common asthma symptoms include

- Coughing, usually at night which prevents sleep
- Wheezing and whistling sounds when exhaling
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness, pressure or pain

Uncommon asthma symptoms may include

- Difficulty sleeping – or nocturnal asthma
- Rapid breathing
- Exercise-induced asthma
- Anxiety – difficulty concentrating
- Chronic coughing – minus the wheezing
- Constant sighing

When you recognize asthma symptoms treat them immediately to prevent escalation. Breathing can become more difficult as your lungs tighten and less air is available silencing the wheezing sound and giving the indication of improvement. On the contrary, with less and less oxygen flowing to your blood you can lose consciousness and die.

Also note that bronchitis, dysfunctional vocal cords or heart failure can cause symptoms that mimic asthma. Talk to your doctor about asthma and understand your body.