

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease that commonly causes wheezing, shortness of breath, tightness in the chest and coughing.

If you have asthma, your airways can become inflamed or swollen when you are exposed to things that trigger your symptoms - these triggers can be different from person to person.

While there is no cure for asthma, in most cases it can be effectively managed to allow people with asthma to live full and active lives.

There are some things in coal mining that can make asthma worse. These include:

- strenuous, physical work
- hot, cold, humid or dry conditions of the mine
- sudden changes in temperature
- dust or chemicals like isocyanates.

It is important that workers are aware of these potential triggers and minimise their risk where possible, including wearing properly-fitted personal protective equipment (PPE).

## Managing asthma

Every person with asthma should have an asthma management plan. This is to help prevent and control symptoms and guide management during a flare-up or asthma attack.

Depending on the severity of your condition, you may be required to provide an asthma management plan as a condition of working in a NSW coal mine.

Medication is an important part of asthma management. The main types of asthma medication are:

- **Preventers:** treat your asthma to help keep you symptom-free. These are usually in an inhaler or puffer
- **Relievers:** treat symptoms caused by your asthma triggers. These are usually in an inhaler or puffer
- **Add-ons:** other types of medications, used for more severe asthma or ongoing symptoms.

Use the right type of medication prescribed for you. Coal mines often have restrictions around taking aluminium underground which can affect the type of asthma puffer you are can use. Your work site can provide advice on this.



## Exercising with asthma

Exercise not only helps to improve fitness, but can help manage asthma. However, some people find that exercise triggers their asthma. If this happens to you, speak to your Doctor about how to manage your symptoms while exercising.

## Tips

- Follow your asthma management plan
- Use medication as prescribed
- Warm up before exercising
- Avoid exercising when there are elevated levels of pollution, pollens, dusts or fumes
- Try breathing through your nose as much as possible (this helps to warm and humidify the air)
- Swim! It's a great activity for people with asthma as it helps to improve breathing and fitness.

## Help is available

Speak to your Doctor/General Practitioner for support and advice on managing your asthma.

CS Health's Physiotherapists or Accredited Exercise Physiologists can also create a suitable exercise program for you.

## More information

Asthma Australia [www.asthma.org.au](http://www.asthma.org.au)

National Asthma Council Australia  
[www.nationalasthma.org.au](http://www.nationalasthma.org.au)