

# Asthma

We can help you!

There is a high prevalence of asthma in the community, which has social and economic costs. There is evidence that self-management and exercise training can reduce these costs and physiotherapists are experts in providing these services to individuals with asthma.



## Treatment

A variety of interventions are commonly used to treat patients with asthma, including:

- Breathing control
- Sputum clearance techniques
- Active cycle of breathing techniques.

There is evidence describing considerable benefits for patients with asthma when treated with breathing interventions.

Asthmatics benefit from fitness programs provided by physiotherapists, lessening reliance on PBS-subsidised medications.

Treatments are appropriate for both acute and chronic stages of asthma.

The role of physiotherapists in asthma self-management includes educating patients about monitoring their asthma symptoms, reviewing and instructing correct inhaled medication delivery technique, and ensuring that a written asthma management plan is in place.

See your physio for guidance about basic knowledge of asthma pathology and how to react when an asthma attack is triggered.

## Exercise and your asthma

Although many people with asthma find that exercise can trigger their symptoms, this does not mean that you should avoid exercise. On the contrary, exercise has benefits for people with asthma, as it does for most other people.

If you are suffering from asthma, speak to your physiotherapist today about prescribing an exercise program to best suit your needs and to cater for your asthma management!

**The treatment of asthma is a function of physiotherapy practice.**

**If you are suffering, don't delay – come visit us today!**

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AUSTRALIAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

M E M B E R

## What is asthma?

Asthma is Australia's most widespread chronic (long-term and persistent) health problem.

It is a disorder affecting the airways of the lungs. People with asthma have very sensitive airways that narrow in response to certain triggers, leading to difficulty in breathing. While there is presently no cure for asthma, correct diagnosis and adequate management of the condition will allow the majority of people with asthma to lead a full and active lifestyle.

### Common Symptoms

- difficulty in breathing • wheezing • tiredness
- chest tightness • coughing • difficulty speaking

### Major trigger factors

- *sudden temperature change*
- *colds/infections • pollens*
- *tobacco smoke • mould*
- *house dust mite*
- *emotions/stress*
- *occupational irritants*
- *certain medications*
- *exercise* (Remember though, regular activity is an important part of life. Don't let asthma stop you from being active. Speak to your physio about exercise that will work for you.)

## The role of physiotherapy. What we can do!

Physiotherapists encounter patients with asthma in a variety of health-care settings and have the knowledge and skills to facilitate best-practice asthma care.

We are a health profession concerned with maximising mobility and quality of life by using clinical reasoning to select and apply the appropriate treatment.

Physiotherapy interventions are provided on the basis of scientific knowledge, evidence and clinical expert opinion, thorough assessment, diagnosis, and ongoing evaluation. Physiotherapy can be used to improve the health outcomes of patients with asthma. This is achieved by drawing upon a range of non-pharmacological modalities, including exercise training and self-management and education.

## Self-management and education

The best-practice management of asthma involves a multidisciplinary team which includes a physiotherapist - an expert in prescribing exercise and supporting patients in self-management.

Self-management is considered to be an important element to achieving good asthma control. Particular elements of the Asthma Management Plan improve patient self-management through monitoring asthma symptoms, seeking regular medical review, and using a written asthma action plan.



The National Asthma Council's Six Step Asthma Management Plan provides an evidence-based framework to maintain the best quality of life for people with asthma, and to reduce mortality and morbidity.

*The six steps are:*

1. Assess asthma severity
2. Achieve best lung function
3. Maintain best lung function by avoiding triggers
4. Maintain best lung function by optimising pharmacological management
5. Develop an asthma action plan should the patient experience worsening asthma symptoms
6. Have regular review and ongoing education

