

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

www.TheAllergyClinic.com

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Benefits of Exercise

As we know, exercise has a number of benefits, including promoting weight loss, reducing the risk of heart disease and other health conditions, improving mental health, boosting energy and promoting better sleep at night. However, for some, especially those with exercise-induced asthma, exercise can prove to be difficult.

Exercise-Induced Asthma

Exercise-induced asthma occurs when there is narrowing of the bronchial airways as a result of strenuous exercise. It can occur during and after exercise, regardless of whether the activity is taking place indoors or outdoors. As you know, asthma has many causes (one of them being allergy), but because exposure to colder conditions is another trigger, exercising outdoors in the cold can sometimes further aggravate exercise-induced asthma. Left untreated, chest symptoms associated with exercise can last for up to an hour, even after the activity has been discontinued. Symptoms of exercise-induced asthma can include coughing, wheezing, chest tightness or chest discomfort, fatigue during exercise and in some cases, poor athletic performance or even avoidance of exercise.

There has been increased awareness over the years about exercise-induced asthma, and elite athletes, including soccer star David Beckham and track and field star Jackie Joyner Kersee, have proven that this respiratory condition should not prevent anyone from achieving their exercise goals.

With that said, it is important to see a specialist to help properly diagnose and treat exercise-induced asthma. In our office, we begin by obtaining a thorough medical history, followed by a comprehensive physical exam and pulmonary function studies or spirometry. Because of a frequent correlation between allergies and asthma, many also benefit from undergoing allergy skin testing.

Treatment Guidelines for Exercise-Induced Asthma.

Albuterol (ProAir HFA, Proventil-HFA, Ventolin HFA) and levalbuterol (Xopenex HFA) are called short-acting beta agonists and these inhaled medications help to “open-up” the bronchial airways. These medications are often prescribed as “rescue” inhalers, but for many, they are also prescribed to use 20-30 minutes before exercise, to help block chest symptoms associated with exercise. In some cases, especially if short-acting bronchodilators are inadequate in controlling chest symptoms with exercise, and there is underlying asthma, inhaled corticosteroids may be prescribed. These medications help to reduce inflammation in the airways and are sometimes called “preventative” inhalers. There are also medications which contain a combination of an inhaled corticosteroid and a long-acting bronchodilator, which not only reduce airway inflammation, but also relax and open up the airways. Lastly, some patients benefit from taking a leukotriene modifier such as Singulair/montelukast.

Regardless of whether you have been prescribed medications, here are a few recommendations that may provide you with additional relief.

1. Warm Up before your exercise routine.
2. Breathe through your nose to warm and humidify the air before it enters your lungs.
3. Wear a mask or scarf when exercising, especially in cold, dry weather. Don't exercise outside when pollen/pollution counts are high.

In observance of the Thanksgiving Holidays, the office will be closed on Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26. However, we will have extended hours on Wednesday, November 24th, with appointments available for allergy shots from 9 until 5. We wish you and your family the best and hope that family reunions are once again a part of our holiday celebrations.