

For Your Health

Caring for Asthma

At Aetna, we believe there is nothing more important than your health. That's why we're pleased to give you information to help you manage your health.

Read on to learn more.

Don't Let Asthma Hold You Back

If you are like many people with asthma, you want to stay active to help strengthen your lungs and improve your health. But physical activity can trigger asthma symptoms. You don't have to let asthma prevent you from being active. Top athletes who have asthma have learned to prevent symptoms before they start. You can, too.

For most people, symptoms may begin minutes after the start of exercise or shortly after completion of exercise. Symptoms may include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or tightness
- Coughing
- Wheezing

Source: "Tips to Remember: Exercise-Induced Asthma," American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, www.aaaai.org.

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You can take preventive actions to avoid asthma symptoms during physical activity. Start by talking with your doctor about how to manage asthma during exercise. Your doctor may suggest taking a prescribed short-acting "rescue" inhaler 15 minutes before beginning physical activity. This will open your airways before you start. The effect usually lasts about four to six hours. Also, use a corticosteroid inhaler or other controller medicine every day. This is important to help you avoid flare-ups.

These suggestions can also help:

- Remain physically active. When your body is used to exercise, you may be less likely to have an asthma attack.
- Avoid physical activity in cold, dry air, which can worsen symptoms. In winter, exercise indoors. If outdoors, cover your mouth and nose with a scarf.
- Plan to be physically active on days when your asthma is under control.
- Warm up for at least 10 minutes before your activity. This relaxes and opens airways. Cool down slowly after physical activity.

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