



# ASTHMA AWARENESS WEEK

**“1 in 9 people in Australia have asthma. That is around 2.5 million people or 11% of the population. 419 people died from asthma in 2014.”**

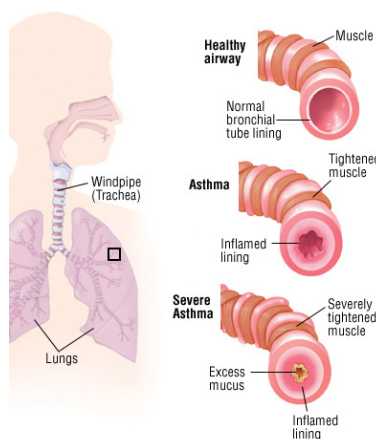
## What is Asthma?

Asthma is a long-term lung condition. People with asthma have sensitive airways in their lungs which react to triggers, causing a ‘flare-up’. In a flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow and there is more mucus. These things make it harder to breathe.

## What are the Symptoms of Asthma?

A person’s asthma symptoms can vary over time - sometimes they will have no symptoms, especially when their asthma is well-controlled. Symptoms often vary from person to person, but they are most commonly:

- Breathlessness
- Wheezing
- Tight feeling in the chest
- Continuing cough



## Who Gets Asthma and Why?

- Asthma affects people of all ages. Some people get asthma when they are young; others when they are older.
- The causes are not entirely understood, although people with asthma often have a family history of asthma, eczema and hayfever.
- Research has shown that exposure to tobacco smoke (especially as a baby or young child), obesity and some chemicals can increase the risk of developing asthma.

An asthma flare-up can happen to anyone with asthma, at any time. Asthma flare-ups can get worse very quickly. Do not wait until asthma is severe to start first aid.

## How to Respond

If you are experiencing a severe or life-threatening asthma attack, call an ambulance and then start asthma first aid. If you are experiencing a mild to moderate asthma attack, start asthma first aid.

## Asthma First Aid

- 1 Sit the person upright**
  - Be calm and reassuring
  - Do not leave them alone
- 2 Give 4 separate puffs of blue/grey reliever puffer**
  - Shake puffer
  - Put 1 puff into spacer
  - Take 4 breaths from spacer

Repeat until 4 puffs have been taken  
Remember: **Shake, 1 puff, 4 breaths**

OR give 2 separate doses of a Bricanyl inhaler (age 6 & over) or a Symbicort inhaler (over 12)


- 3 Wait 4 minutes**
  - If there is no improvement, give 4 more separate puffs of blue/grey reliever as above

OR give 1 more dose of Bricanyl or Symbicort inhaler.


- 4 If there is still no improvement call emergency assistance - Dial Triple Zero (000)**
  - Say ‘ambulance’ and that someone is having an asthma attack
  - Keep giving 4 separate puffs every 4 minutes until emergency assistance arrives

OR give 1 dose of a Bricanyl or Symbicort every 4 minutes - up to 3 more doses of Symbicort



### Call emergency assistance immediately - Dial Triple Zero (000)

- If the person is not breathing
- If the person’s asthma suddenly becomes worse or is not improving
- If the person is having an asthma attack and a reliever is not available
- If you are not sure if it’s asthma
- If the person is known to have Anaphylaxis - follow their Anaphylaxis Action Plan, then give Asthma First Aid

**Blue/grey reliever medication is unlikely to harm, even if the person does not have asthma**



Contact your local Asthma Foundation  
1800 ASTHMA Helpline (1800 278 462) [asthmaaustralia.org.au](http://asthmaaustralia.org.au)

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