

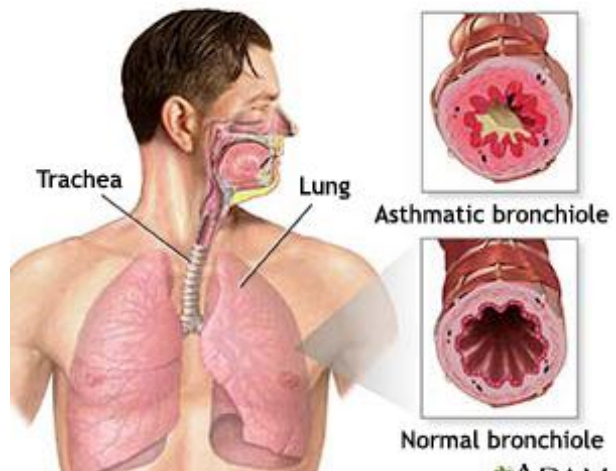
Asthma

World Asthma Day is celebrated on first Tuesday of the fifth month every year. It is going to be observed on the 06th of May, 2014.

Unfortunately...asthma is one of the most common chronic diseases, with an estimated 300 million individuals affected worldwide.

Fortunately... asthma can be effectively treated and most patients can achieve good control of their disease. When asthma is under control patients can:

- Avoid troublesome symptoms night and day
- Use little or no reliever medication
- Have productive, physically active lives
- Have (near) normal lung function
- Avoid serious attacks



Magnitude of the disease

- India has an estimated 15-20 million asthmatics.
- In India, rough estimates indicate a prevalence of between 10% and 15% in 5-11 year old children.

What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung disease that makes breathing difficult. Chronic inflammation and reactions to triggers narrow the airways in the lungs. Asthma can become life-threatening if it is not managed.

What are the signs and symptoms of asthma?

- Coughing
- Wheezing (whistling sound produced in the respiratory airways during breathing)
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness

What may trigger an asthma attack?

- A cold, the flu, or a sinus infection
- Exercise

- Weather changes, especially cold, dry air
- Smoking or secondhand smoke
- Fumes from chemicals, dust, air pollution, or other small particles in the air
- Pets, pollen, dust mites, or cockroaches

How is asthma treated?

- Medicines decrease inflammation, open airways, and make it easier to breathe.
- Medicines may be inhaled, taken as a pill, or injected.
- Short-term medicines relieve your symptoms quickly (Relievers). Long-term medicines are used to prevent future attacks (Controllers). Patient may also need medicine to help control their allergies.

What are controllers?

- Controllers are medicines that prevent asthma attacks from starting. There are two types of controller medicines anti-inflammatory medicines and airway openers.
- Anti-inflammatory medicines work by reducing the inflammation in the airways that occurs in asthma. The most effective and most commonly used anti-inflammatory medicines are inhaled glucocorticosteroids, such as budesonide, beclomethasone and fluticasone.
- Airway openers, which are also known as bronchodilators, are medicines that help to prevent attacks progressing by quickly opening up the narrowed airways. They do this by relaxing the muscles surrounding the airways. Long-acting airway openers, including formoterol and salmeterol, are effective as controllers when they are used regularly with an inhaled glucocorticosteroid.

What are relievers?

- Relievers or airway openers are medicines that provide rapid relief from an asthma attack by quickly opening up the narrowed airways (dilating the bronchi). They do this by relaxing the muscles surrounding the airways. The most widely used short- and quick-acting airway openers are salbutamol and terbutaline.

When should patients seek immediate care?

- You have severe shortness of breath.
- Your lips or nails turn blue or gray.
- The skin around your neck and ribs pulls in with each breath.
- You have shortness of breath, even after you take your short-term medicine as directed.

Reference:

1. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs206/en/>
2. Micromedex's Healthcare Series Online 2.0