



## ***Know the Facts:*** **Exercise can trigger your asthma**

Each person has his or her own “triggers” that can set off an asthma attack. Some examples include animal hair, dust, and physical exercise. Even those who have never been diagnosed with asthma may develop asthma symptoms when they exercise. This is known as exercise-induced asthma (EIA).

### **Symptoms of EIA include:**

- Difficulty breathing within 5-20 minutes after exercising
- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Coughing
- Chest pain

### **What causes EIA?**

During strenuous exercise, most people tend to breathe with their mouths. But, if you exercise in cold weather, the dry air travels to the lower airways without being warmed and humidified by the nose. This causes your airways to narrow and asthma symptoms to occur.

### **Are you at risk?**

You are at a higher risk for EIA if you:

- Are a child, because children tend to be more physically active than adults.
- Do aerobic exercise, such as running or playing basketball, hockey or soccer.
- Participate in cold weather activities.

### **What can you do?**

Before starting any exercise program, talk with your healthcare provider. He or she may recommend that you take an inhaled medication before exercise to control and prevent exercise-induced bronchospasms.

### **Follow these tips:**

1. If you have any breathing problems before you begin to exercise, don't do any physical activity until the symptoms go away.
2. Warm up before you exercise by stretching and/or running rapidly in place for 30 seconds and resting for 60 seconds for two or three cycles.
3. Try swimming which doesn't seem to trigger asthma symptoms because the warm humidity from the water causes your airways to stay open.
4. Try walking, biking, hiking, or team sports (baseball, football, wrestling or gymnastics) that require short bursts of energy.
5. Spend at least 10 minutes cooling down after you exercise. This will prevent sudden changes in the temperature and humidity in your airways.



***Controlling  
EIA is possible.  
Consult your  
healthcare  
professional  
and follow these  
simple tips.***

### More tips for controlling EIA:

6. In cold weather, wear a scarf or surgical mask over your mouth and nose to warm inhaled air.
7. Always exercise in a place that is free of inhaled allergens, such as dust or mold.
8. Avoid exercising on days when the air pollution is high.

Sources: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology; American Lung Association

**Call 1-888-545-1710 to speak to a nurse 24-hours-a-day  
or visit [www.WYHealthyTogether.com](http://www.WYHealthyTogether.com).**

*Disclaimer: Information or education provided in this fact sheet is not intended to replace medical advice from your healthcare provider. The information provided on this fact sheet is not all-inclusive of this topic.*

**Healthy Together!** is offered by the Wyoming Department of Health to all Wyoming EqualityCare clients at no cost. The program provides one-on-one support from a nurse, educational materials to encourage the self-management of health and assistance in coordinating care among multiple providers. **Healthy Together!** also provides EqualityCare clients with information on weight loss, smoking cessation, and how to adopt healthy lifestyles. **Healthy Together!** was named the Best Government Disease Management Program by the Disease Management Association of America in 2005.