

# **Exercise-Induced Wheezing**

### What is exercise-induced wheezing?

Exercise-induced wheezing, or bronchoconstriction (BRON-ko-kon-STRIKshun), happens when your airways shrink during or after exercise. It can cause shortness of breath, coughing, or wheezing.

#### What causes it?

When you exercise, you breathe faster. If you have exercise-induced wheezing, your airways become dry and irritated, making it hard to breathe. If you also have asthma, the swelling in your airways will feel like an asthma flare-up.

#### How do I know if I have it?

Tell your doctor about your exercise routine and symptoms. He or she will examine you. You may also need to do breathing tests before and after exercise to see if you have it.

#### How is it treated?

Your symptoms can be treated with or without medicines. Some ways to treat wheezing without medicine include doing a proper warm-up before exercising and wearing a mask when you exercise in cold weather. You should also avoid things that can make symptoms worse, like cold weather, dry air, dust, pollen, or chemicals in the air (such as at hockey rinks and swimming pools).

Several inhaled medicines can help your symptoms, including the following:

- Short-acting bronchodilator: Take 15 minutes before exercise; lasts three to four hours
- Mast cell stabilizer: Take 15 to 30 minutes before exercise; lasts three to four hours
- Leukotriene modifier: Take every day; may last up to 24 hours
- Corticosteroid: Take once or twice a day if you exercise and already have asthma

You and your doctor can talk about which medicine is right for you, and how and when to take it. Follow your doctor's directions and tell him or her if the medicine isn't helping. If you have serious symptoms that don't get better with medicine, get medical attention right away.

## Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource
Web site: http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/asthma/lung/741.html

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology Web site: http://www.aaaai.org/patients/publicedmat/ tips/exerciseinducedasthma.stm

American College of Sports Medicine
Web site: http://www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?S
ection=brochures2&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.
cfm&ContentFileID=1309

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