

ASTHMA & THE ATHLETE

SPORT HEALTH PROVIDES SPORTS TRAINERS WITH A GUIDE FOR ASTHMA AND THE ATHLETE, WITH TIPS FOR ASTHMATICS TO EXERCISE AND COMPETE SAFELY.

Well-controlled asthma should not prevent exercise and participation in most sports (however, people with asthma should not scuba dive). People with diagnosed asthma should have an asthma management plan or an asthma action plan that is established in conjunction with their doctor. The athlete, teammates, coach and the sports trainer should know this plan. The sports trainer should also encourage the person with asthma to:

- know the severity of their asthma
- exercise safely and regularly to improve fitness and lung function
- avoid trigger factors where possible
- perform at their best by using the right medication in the correct manner
- have their asthma checked regularly by their doctor – every six months
- have a ready supply of medications for use before, during and after exercise.

The sports trainer should identify the athletes in their team that have asthma and know their asthma management plan





PRE-EXERCISE ADVICE

During pre-exercise, the athlete should avoid:

- allergy triggers, where possible (e.g. dust, pollens, grasses etc.)
- exercising in cold air (e.g. early morning or late evening)
- vigorous exercise when the athlete has a viral infection
- any exercise if the athlete is wheezing or has a chest infection.

The athlete should always:

- warm up adequately to allow the body to adapt to changes in the weather; an indication of an adequate warm-up is a light sweat
- if advised by the doctor, take medication 5-10 minutes before exercise
- stretch after warming up.

Two different types of warm-up have been shown to be effective in reducing exercise-induced asthma (EIA):

- 5-7 sets of 30-second sprints with 30-60 seconds rest
- a brisk walk/slow jog for 20-30 minutes.

DURING EXERCISE ADVICE

- If asthma develops during exercise, stop the athlete and have them take their reliever medication
- do not allow the athlete to return to activity
- refer the athlete to their doctor
- do not encourage an athlete to “run through” an asthma attack.

POST-EXERCISE ADVICE

Ensure an adequate cool-down takes place; 5-10 minutes of light activity followed by stretching.

If EIA continues, refer the athlete to their doctor, who may recommend:

- a change in medication
- regular preventative medication in the overall asthma management plan.

Want to learn more on asthma? Sports Medicine Australia runs a range of courses. For the complete calendar of courses, visit sma.org.au.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on asthma, visit the National Asthma Council website at www.nationalasthma.org.au.