



Allergy, Asthma and Exercise Facts

Regular exercise is beneficial for everyone, and may be particularly helpful for individuals with asthma and other allergic diseases. Though many people with asthma avoid exercise because they fear an asthma episode, a well-planned exercise program can improve their overall physical and emotional well being and help them manage their asthma symptoms. Here are some exercise tips for allergic patients:

- An exercise program should be planned in consultation with an allergist-immunologist or other physician. The doctor can advise which activities may provoke asthma or other allergic symptoms, and how to treat the symptoms.
- Exercise-induced asthma symptoms such as tightness in the chest, coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath may be controlled by using an inhaled bronchodilator before exercising.
- The nose should be clear when exercising. The nasal passages act as natural filters and humidifiers to keep air at proper temperatures and filter out pollutants, irritants and allergens. The proper use of medications such as antihistamines, decongestants or prescription nasal sprays can help.
- With proper medical supervision, patients with asthma can train for any sport. Stop-and-go exercises such as wrestling, weight training, softball and doubles tennis are usually considered best for people with asthma. Warm, humidified air from water makes swimming an ideal sport for allergy and asthma-prone athletes.
- Avoid outdoor exercise in cold, windy weather or when pollen counts are high. Exercising near fields of grass and weeds, or in areas where there are high levels of respiratory irritants, such as tobacco smoke, car exhaust or factory pollutants, also may aggravate symptoms of asthma or allergic diseases.
- A person with a known severe allergy to insect stings should always carry injectable epinephrine when exercising outdoors.
- When exercising indoors, stay away from open windows and doors to limit contact with outdoor allergens. Use a mat if exercising on carpeting, which can harbor allergy triggers such as dust mites and animal dander.
- Limit exercise during periods when symptoms of asthma or allergic diseases are severe and may be aggravated by increased activity.