

Asthma:

Asthma is a disease of the smaller airways resulting in chronic inflammation. People with asthma experience symptoms of **cough, shortness of breath, wheeze (a whistling, squeaky sound when you breathe), chest tightness or fast breathing**. Asthma is not a single disease, everyone experiences it differently. Symptoms may be on and off but inflammation in the lungs is continuous, **therefore treatment is compulsory to control the inflammation**.

The diagnosis of asthma is based on symptoms, a physical examination, and lung function tests. *It is important to understand better about the type of asthma you have because treatment varies for each individual.* There is no cure for asthma but treatment improves quality of life.

Types of asthma

Allergic asthma:

Allergic asthma is the most common type of asthma that **usually starts in childhood and tends to run in families**. It is often seen in people with other allergic diseases such as eczema, allergic rhinitis or food allergies. Inhaled corticosteroids controls symptoms for many patients with allergic asthma. Some patients may outgrow their childhood around adolescent stage. Common triggers of allergic asthma are pets, dust mite, pollen, mould or cockroach.

Non-allergic asthma:

Non-allergic asthma is more **common in adults and women are more often affected than men**. Triggers include viral infections, humidity, cold air, chemicals or fragrances. Allergy tests are negative in this type of asthma.

Adult onset asthma

People who develop **asthma in adulthood often experience severe symptoms** and need high dose of inhaled steroids, which may be ineffective in some adult patients. Most of the time, adult-onset asthma does not go away.

Aspirin exacerbated asthma

Taking **aspirin or other medication similar to aspirin** in structure (e.g. **diclofenac, ibuprofen, phenylbutazone, indomethacin, mefenamic acid**, etc). can worsen asthma symptoms within minutes. Other symptoms in this type of asthma include nasal congestion, loss of smell, frontal headache. **Patients with Aspirin exacerbated asthma must avoid aspirin and other medication similar to it.**

Exercise induced asthma (EIA)

Exercise is a common trigger for asthma but **people with Exercise Induced Asthma have symptoms only during exercise**. An exercise challenge test together with lung function test are done to diagnose exercise-induced asthma. Short-acting beta-agonists (e.g. salbutamol) is often recommended 20minutes before exercise but additional treatment such as leukotriene receptor antagonist may be used for this type asthma.

Work related asthma

Asthma can either start at work (work induced asthma) or get worse at work in people with existing asthma (work exacerbated asthma). Symptoms are usually of adult onset. **Work related asthma improves when not at work** e.g. holidays or weekends.

Treatment:

Dr Mabelane works along with each patient to create an asthma treatment plan based on the type of asthma you have.