



You're having an asthma attack if any of the following happens:

- Your reliever isn't helping or lasting over four hours
- Your symptoms are getting worse (cough, breathlessness, wheeze or tight chest)
- You're too breathless or it's difficult to speak, eat or sleep
- Your breathing is getting faster and it feels like you can't get your breath in properly.

Don't be afraid of causing a fuss, even at night. It's important that you seek help straight away. If you go to A&E (Accident and Emergency) or are admitted to hospital, if possible take your written asthma action plan with you so staff can see details of your asthma medicines.

How does hay fever increase your risk of asthma symptoms or an asthma attack?

Hay fever - particularly from grass pollen - can be a risk to people with asthma. Studies show that when there are higher concentrations of grass pollen in the air, more adults are admitted to hospital because of their asthma.

For most people pollen is harmless. But if you have an allergy to pollen your immune system overreacts and produces histamine. It's the histamine that irritates your nose, eyes and throat, giving you typical hay fever symptoms.

For many people with asthma, this release of histamine when they have hay fever makes asthma symptoms worse.

Having a blocked nose can also be a problem for your asthma. Usually when you breathe in, you breathe in through your nose so the air is warmed up and moistened before it gets to your airways. But when your nose is blocked you breathe in through your mouth, so the air you're inhaling is colder and drier.

In some people with asthma, the airways are sensitive to this and react. This can lead to asthma symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, a shortness of breath and tightness in the chest.

Try these practical tips from people with asthma

- Keep doors and windows closed when you're indoors and the pollen count's high.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting in your eyes when you're outside.
- Change your clothes and have a shower when you've been outside.
- Don't cut the grass and avoid walking in grassy areas if you're allergic to grass pollen.
- If possible, avoid drying your clothes outside as pollen will stick to them.
- Remember that pollen counts are generally higher in the early morning and late afternoon/early evening, so it may be better to avoid being outside at these times if possible.
- Dust with a damp cloth and vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particle arresting) filter regularly.

Don't smoke or let other people smoke around you because it can make hay fever (and asthma) symptoms worse.

Alcohol can increase your sensitivity to pollen so it may be worth avoiding it when the pollen count is high and/or your symptoms are worse.

If possible, don't go outside before, during or just after a thunderstorm.

Keep an eye on air pollution levels on the Defra website and, if possible, avoid going out when air pollution levels are particularly high.