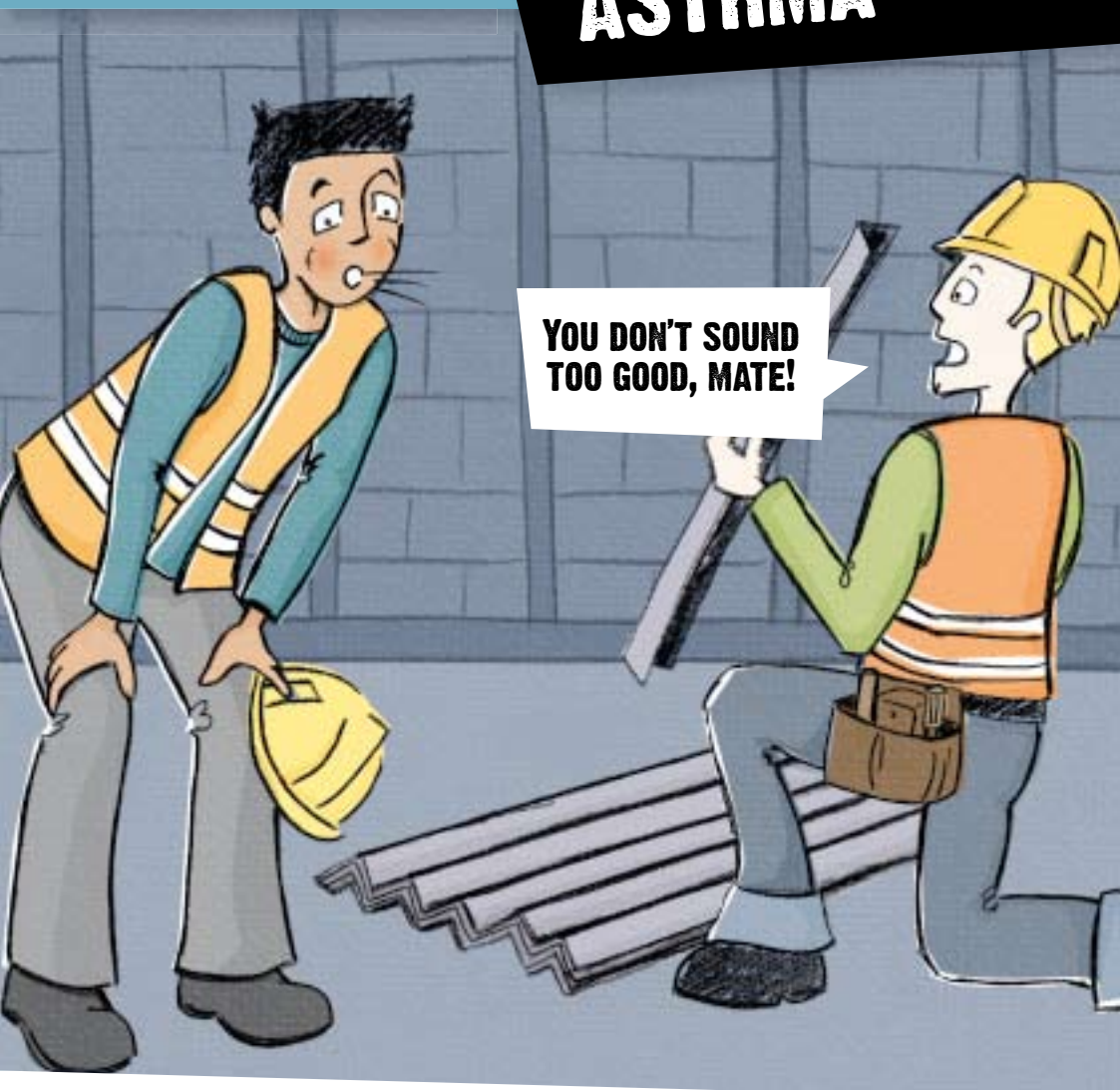


HELPAMATE!

ASTHMA



ASTHMA IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR VISITING A DOCTOR. AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN CAN HELP YOU MANAGE AND CONTROL YOUR ASTHMA.

IN VICTORIA APPROXIMATELY 600,000 PEOPLE CURRENTLY HAVE ASTHMA.

WHAT IS ASTHMA?

Asthma is a condition that affects the airways – the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs.

People with asthma have airways that are almost always sensitive and inflamed. When exposed to certain triggers their airways narrow making it hard for them to breathe.

Three main factors cause the airways to become narrow:

- The inside lining of the airways becomes red and swollen
- Extra mucus may be produced
- The muscle around the airways tightens.

HOW DO YOU RECOGNISE ASTHMA?

The most common asthma symptoms are:

- shortness of breath
- wheezing
- tightness in the chest
- dry, irritating, persistent cough.

WHAT TRIGGERS ASTHMA SYMPTOMS?

- colds and flu
- cigarette smoke
- exposure to cigarette smoke (passive smoke)
- inhales allergens (eg: dust, moulds, animal dander, and dust mites)
- environmental factors (eg: dust, pollution, wood smoke and bush fires)
- changes in the temperature and weather

- strong smells (eg: perfumes, cleaners)
- emotional factors (eg: distress, excitement)
- foods, preservatives, flavourings and colourings.

Every person's asthma is different. Not all people have the same triggers nor will they react to all triggers. You may not always know what triggers your asthma. Correct diagnosis and appropriate asthma management will allow the majority of people with asthma to lead a full and active lifestyle.

WHAT IS AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN?

An Asthma Action Plan is a written set of instructions prepared in partnership with your doctor that assists you to manage your asthma at different times.

Your plan should help you to:

- ✓ Recognise worsening asthma symptoms
- ✓ Start treatment quickly
- ✓ Seek the right medical assistance

Early attention to worsening asthma may prevent you from having a serious attack. Ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan.

Unfortunately, many people with asthma don't know about Asthma Action Plans. If you, or someone you know has asthma, let them know that there are ways to manage and control their asthma.



DON'T IGNORE ASTHMA

If you or someone in your family has asthma, it is important to take action to manage it. Serious asthma attacks can occur. If you have asthma, it is important to recognise the signs and symptoms of your asthma getting worse. You should know your triggers and how to manage them. You and your family should know what to do in an asthma emergency (refer to page 4).

There is no cure for asthma, but diagnosis and good management will let you enjoy a full and active lifestyle.

Visit your GP if you have any concerns about Asthma or would like a written Asthma Action Plan.

FAST FACTS

- ✓ A large proportion of the Australian population has asthma.
- ✓ Asthma affects approximately 1 in 9 adults and 1 in 6 children.
- ✓ For about 10% of adults with asthma, the condition can be the result of exposure to specific substances in the workplace.
- ✓ The major risk factors for asthma include a family history of asthma and a sensitivity to allergic reactions – between 80-90% of individuals with asthma have an allergic basis to their asthma.
- ✓ An Asthma Action Plan from your doctor will help you to manage and control your asthma.



YEAH, THE DOCTOR FIXED ME UP WITH THE RIGHT MEDICATION AND AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN, SO I'M FEELING MUCH BETTER.

SO YOU FOUND OUT YOU'VE GOT ASTHMA, TONY?

ONCE TONY KNEW THAT HE HAD ASTHMA, HE COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. WITH THE HELP OF HIS DOCTOR, HE NOTICED A GREAT IMPROVEMENT.

ASTHMA FIRST AID

For first time asthma attacks

If a person has difficulty breathing and is not known to have asthma, call an ambulance immediately and follow the Asthma First Aid Plan. No harm is likely to result from giving a blue reliever puffer to someone without asthma.

A Bricanyl Turbuhaler may be used in first aid treatment if a puffer and spacer are unavailable.

Asthma First Aid Poster

An Asthma First Aid poster is available through The Asthma Foundation of Victoria.

To order a poster, call **1800 645 130** or visit www.asthma.org.au and download a Brochure Order Form.



HELPAMATE!

The Asthma Foundation of Victoria can help you understand your asthma better. Call the HelpLine on **1800 645 130**, Monday to Friday 9.30am–3.00pm or visit their website www.asthma.org.au

Other websites with information & assistance for asthma:

www.vicnet.net.au/health/asthma
www.nationalasthma.org.au

IF IN DOUBT, ALWAYS SPEAK TO A DOCTOR.

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