

# Looking After Your Asthma & Allergic Rhinitis

## Asthma & allergic rhinitis

Allergic rhinitis, commonly known as hay fever, can make managing asthma more difficult. Around 80% of people with asthma also have allergic rhinitis. Review your asthma and your allergic rhinitis with your doctor.

## Know your symptoms

It can be difficult to identify if your symptoms are asthma or allergic rhinitis. Here are some common symptoms of each.

### **ASTHMA**

- Feeling short of breath
- A feeling of tightness in the chest
- Wheezing – a continuous, high pitched sound coming from the chest while breathing
- Coughing

### **ALLERGIC RHINITIS**

- Runny, itchy nose
- Sneezing
- Itchy or watery eyes
- Blocked nose
- Breathing through the mouth

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about your symptoms and their severity, as well as how often they occur. This will help determine the best management plan for you.

## Check your technique

Using your device correctly helps your medications work better. This includes inhalers, spacers as well as nasal sprays. To check your device technique, contact your doctor or pharmacist. If you have asthma and/or COPD, call Asthma WA on (08) 9289 3600 to book a free education session with one of our Respiratory Health Nurses or Educators.

## Know your triggers

Identifying, and avoiding or minimising exposure to your confirmed triggers may help to control your asthma and allergic rhinitis. Triggers may include pollens, dust mites, grasses, animal dander and mould.

Helpful tips to minimise your exposure:

- Vacuum and dust surfaces with a damp cloth regularly
- Remove soft toys from bedrooms or wash weekly in hot water over 55° Celsius. Do the same for your bed linen.
- Close doors and windows on high-pollen or windy days and stay indoors, if possible
- Plant low allergen plants in the garden
- Use dust mite resistant covers on mattresses, pillows and doonas
- Avoid having pets in the main living areas and bedrooms

## Treat your allergic rhinitis

Treatment options for allergic rhinitis can include one or a combination of the following:

- preservative-free nasal saline sprays/irrigations
- antihistamines (nasal sprays, tablets, eyedrops and syrups)
- corticosteroid nasal spray
- decongestant (oral tablets or preservative-free nasal spray)
- allergen-specific immunotherapy/desensitisation
- allergen avoidance

Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about the best treatment options for you.

## Asthma flare-ups

If your allergic rhinitis causes your asthma to flare-up, be prepared. Always carry your reliever with you, follow your Asthma Action Plan and know asthma first aid. Remember to continue to take your preventer medication every day as prescribed.

**Asthma WA can help you learn about asthma, symptoms, triggers, medication and asthma first aid. Call us on (08) 9289 3600 to book your free consultation**