

## How to determine if you have asthma

I'm Lisa Birnbach. 22 million Americans, men, women, and children, have asthma. It can be a killer, so it's important to know if you have it, so you can get treatment. Here to discuss this is Dr. Jordan Josephson, a top ear, nose, and throat specialist in New York, and author of Sinus Relief Now. How do you know if you have asthma?

Well, the definition of asthma is reversible wheezing. So if you wheeze at any time, whether it's while you're exercising, while you're walking, when you have your sinus infection and the mucous is dripping into your lung, you have asthma.

What causes asthma?

Well, asthma is a reaction in the lung and the small airways that constrict. And as a result, you get the wheezing sound. But asthma can be mild, to where there's a little bit of a wheeze, and maybe a little bit of constriction and tightness in your chest. Or it can be status asthmaticus, where your lung shuts down, and you can't breathe at all, and you can be on the verge of death.

Will you have warning signs that you have early-stage asthma, or can you go straight to that severe kind?

Typically for most of us that have asthma, we know that it starts up when our sinuses act up, and all of a sudden we're in the middle of cold season. It starts up when we exercise. But maybe you have allergies and sinus problems that have been causing the asthma to flare, so what we did was we coined the term CAID, Chronic Airway-Digestive Inflammatory Disease. If you have sinus problems, if you have allergies, that can lead to asthma. If you have GERD reflux, the acids reflux into your lung, or can reflux into your lung, and that can cause an asthma flare-up. So you really need to go to a specialist that specializes in sinus problems, allergies, asthma, and GERD to figure out what's causing your asthma.

What are the other symptoms beside shortness of breath? I mean, when somebody can't breathe in their sleep, that's scary.

Yes, it is scary. For parents that have children that are severe asthmatics, they really need to go address it by speaking to their pediatrician and forming a team that can treat their asthma and the other problems that they're having, which are allergies, sinus problems, and maybe GERD. And if they can treat their child as a whole, the asthma will improve. And it's very important to take away those things that cause the asthma to flare. And if it means that your child needs to be away from certain allergens that cause these allergies, maybe he needs allergy shots. Maybe he needs antibiotics to fight the infection that he has. Maybe he needs to irrigate his sinuses out. Whatever it may be, you need to make sure that you're on top of the game, because feeling like you can't breathe and feeling like you're suffocating is a terrible feeling.

We read that in the inner cities of America, asthma is on the rise tremendously. Why is that?

Huge. Well, the inner cities, they're more crowded, allergies are ramping up with global warming all throughout the country. And then you have people living in buildings, buildings with mold, buildings with various hazards of--

Dust mites and--

--Inflammants and , and dust mites.

Right.

So that's why in the inner city. And typically in the inner city, a lot of times you're talking about the lower socioeconomic groups. So they're not really able to get to the people to treat the asthma properly. And they're really treating their asthma as a, wow, this is really bad, I'm off to the emergency room where they'll band aid you, get you back on track, and send you out. You're not really primarily treating your asthma on a chronic basis. You're doing it as an emergent basis, and that unfortunately happens in the inner city very often.

So you say they're all interrelated, so how do you isolate-- note yes, this is asthma, this isn't allergy, this isn't sinus infection. This isn't anything else.

Well, that's why it's so important to make sure that you find a physician, a doctor, that treats all of these problems. You really need to get a team leader, someone that understands asthma, and its interaction with sinus problems and allergies and GERD. And then together, they can sit down with you, talk about what your problems are, and decipher, and actually, as you said, pull them apart and address them all, so that your asthma's improved.

Thank you so much.

You're welcome.

I'm Lisa Birnbach.