



Sleep and asthma

Sleep is essential for good health. Healthy sleep means having a regular sleep-wake cycle, getting enough sleep each day, and enjoying good-quality sleep (falling asleep easily, staying asleep through the night and feeling refreshed after sleeping).

Disruption to any of these can affect health and wellbeing. Asthma symptoms can disrupt sleep and sleep disturbances can affect asthma control and quality of life.

Poor asthma control is linked to sleep disturbance

Asthma symptoms during sleep or on waking are a sign of poor asthma control. Frequent night-time symptoms are a sign of increased risk of asthma flare-ups. Some asthma treatments can also affect sleep.



Asthma, common comorbidities and sleep health

The following conditions can be common in people with asthma and can affect sleep quality.

Condition	Effects on sleep health
Obstructive sleep apnoea	This can lead to unrefreshing sleep, fatigue, poor concentration, low mood, excessive daytime sleepiness.
Obesity	Obesity is a major risk factor for obstructive sleep apnoea.
Allergic rhinitis (hay fever)	This may cause sleep disturbances.
Chronic rhinosinusitis	This may cause sleep disturbances.
Inducible laryngeal obstruction	This can occur during sleep.
Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease	This may cause sleep disturbances and is made worse with poor quality sleep.
Anxiety and depression	These conditions may contribute to poor quality sleep.

This summary is based on the National Asthma Council Australia’s ‘Sleep and asthma: Information for health professionals’.

View the information and full reference list at: nationalasthma.org.au/living-with-asthma/resources/health-professionals/information-paper/sleep-and-asthma-information-for-health-professionals.

Tips to improve sleep quality and maintain good asthma management

- Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor. Check that medications are not expired.
- Ensure that you are using your asthma inhalers correctly. Incorrect device technique may mean that the medications are trapped in your mouth or throat instead of reaching the airways where they are needed. The National Asthma Council Australia has a comprehensive 'how-to' video library, with a range of step-by-step tutorials on how to use various asthma inhalers and allergy nasal sprays.
- Improve your sleep environment by removing common triggers for asthma and allergies. This includes dust mites, mould spores or pollen that may be in the air. Sensitive Choice approved bedding products can help reduce the impact of allergens in the bedroom.
- Consider getting an air purifier to filter out allergens from the air in your home. All Sensitive Choice approved air purifiers have a HEPA-13 filter that filters 99.97% of particles, as small as 0.3 microns.
- Take the asthma control check, available from the National Asthma Council Australia, to see if your asthma is well controlled.

Signs of well controlled asthma include:

- no night-time asthma symptoms.
- no asthma symptoms when waking up.



Disclaimer: It is important to note that information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to replace professional medical advice. Any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.

Do not accept night time asthma symptoms as 'normal'

Experiencing any type of difficulty breathing when sleeping or waking up should not be ignored.

Individuals experience asthma symptoms differently. Monitor if your sleep is being affected by any of the following asthma symptoms:

- coughing
- wheezing
- shortness of breath
- chest tightness.

Please visit your doctor and ask about sleep when discussing your asthma symptoms.

Download asthma action plans



Browse our how-to video library



Take the asthma control check

