How Stress Impacts Your Asthma: Can Stress Trigger Asthma Attacks?

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Effects of Stress on Asthma

While asthma attacks are most closely associated with triggers like exposure to allergens, dust, mold or secondhand smoke, there also seems to be a link between stress and asthma. New studies indicate that stress is a real, not imagined, asthma trigger. So, let's take a look at the effects of stress on asthma.

For many years, it was believed that perceived links between stress and asthma were “all in the patient’s head.” However, the mainstream medical community has reversed its position on the matter. Today, doctors think that stress and anxiety can cause more frequent and more severe asthma attacks.

The secret to avoiding stress-related asthma attacks is to treat stress and anxiety just like any other asthma trigger. In other words, minimize its effects, or avoid it altogether.

What Causes Stress-Related Asthma Attacks?

Mental stress affects many different bodily systems, including the gastrointestinal system, the nervous system, the cardiovascular system, the musculoskeletal system and the immune system. People with respiratory conditions such as asthma may also experience stress-related symptoms which affect their breathing.

Stress and anxiety have been observed to trigger physiological responses in the body, which could trigger an asthma attack in a person who suffers from the condition. Such attacks could be situation-specific, caused by a stressful or anxiety-inducing situation that is directly at hand. Examples include:

- Public speaking.
- Receiving worrisome or bad news.
- Family conflicts.
- Exposure to dangerous situations.
- Scholastic or professional examinations.

Generalized or underlying stress or anxiety, which you might experience if you are worried about things like money, your career or your relationships or marriage, can also cause similar physiological reactions. Anxiety and stress can affect the nerves and cause muscle contractions, which could ultimately lead to asthma symptoms or an asthma attack.

Manage Your Stress to Manage Your Asthma

The best way to reduce your likelihood of suffering stress-related asthma attacks is to keep your stress and anxiety under control. Relaxation methods, such as meditation and yoga, have proven very effective in helping

people manage stress and anxiety without using drugs. However, if you have an underlying anxiety disorder, you should discuss it with your doctor and treat its symptoms directly.

Specific to stress, you should also work to identify the leading cause or causes of stress in your life and create a plan to address them. Don’t hesitate to reach out for professional help if you find that you are not able to bring these sources of stress under control without assistance.

Doctors also strongly suggest that you exercise regularly and get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night. These habits promote both physical and mental health and have been clinically proven to reduce stress levels in several ways. Exercise gives you a positive outlet for stress, and it also makes your brain produce chemicals known to alleviate stress. Sleep helps you function better, and it recharges your body, helping you maintain a calmer and more positive mindset.

Stress reduction will help you achieve better overall health in addition to reducing asthma symptoms. Aiming to minimize stress in all areas of your life is a good strategy if you want to enjoy improved physical and mental well-being.