6 Tips for Running With Asthma

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Running with Asthma

As an asthmatic, exercising, particularly running, can be a challenge. Throughout the years, my running routine has waxed and waned, depending on how my asthma has fared. As I have entered my 30s, I have finally settled on a routine for managing my asthma while still being active.

1. Take Medications Diligently

That Advair inhaler that is prescribed? Yes – it is prescribed for a reason.

In my 20s, I often forgot to take my Advair inhaler. I'd set out on my daily run and my lungs would seize up. I'd double over, trying to catch my breath, wondering why I could not run 1 mile when the day before I had run 2 miles effortlessly.

Then I would think to myself, "Did I take my Advair this morning?" Inevitably, I couldn't remember, which probably meant that I had not.

I talked to my doctor who recommended alarms. I began to use my smart phone intelligently – I set alarms for all of the times I would need to take my asthma medications. From that point on, I rarely forgot to take my asthma medications.

2. Carry a Rescue Inhaler

Vital to my running success is my trusty albuterol inhaler. I never leave home without it.

There are runs when I don't need it, and there are runs when I need it several times, but I never want to be caught without it.

Albuterol is a rescue medication – it helps to open up the airways quickly. If you are suffering during a run (or anytime, for that matter), taking a couple of puffs will open up the airways quickly.

On the rare occasion that I forget to take my Advair in the morning, I need to take a few puffs of the albuterol inhaler. I find that I also need it more often when allergy season is in full swing. There are also times that I cannot pinpoint why I need the inhaler.

So, if you are a runner with asthma make sure to never leave home without an albuterol inhaler!

3. Protect Your Face

Although I don't run outside in cold temperatures, the cold can trigger asthma symptoms. For cold weather

runners who are also asthmatics, it is recommended to cover your face.

Cold air is dry, which results in drying of the airways. This drying of the airways is what exacerbates asthma symptoms. Covering your face while running helps moisten the air surrounding your face.

Cotton face covers are not recommended, as they can freeze to the face in freezing temperatures. A fleece face cover is best as it retains heat even when it is wet.

4. Check the Weather

Checking the weather forecast is important before tying up your running shoes. Some things to take note of are the heat and humidity. The hotter it is, the harder your body will work and sweat, which can make breathing more difficult. The same goes for high humidity levels. Even without running, humidity in the air can make your nasal passages feel clogged, which can compromise your breathing.

5. Run at a Certain Time of Day

By a certain time of day, we mean the morning! This tip goes hand in hand to the tip above, especially in the summer months or if a you live in a warm climate year-long. In the morning, the sun, heat, humidity and even airborne allergens are at their weakest. By running in the morning, you can keep your breathing clearer and you can exercise with less effort.

6. Be Wary of the Pollen Count

I find it harder to run outside when the pollen count is high. I am highly allergic to particular types of pollens.

During these times, I make sure to take an antihistamine, such as Allegra or Claritin. Antihistamines reduce symptoms of allergies.

I also try to run outside when the pollen count is likely to be the lowest, which is in the early morning hours.

When planning my running schedule, I go to pollen.com to find the forecast. When the pollen count is expected to be exceptionally high, I take my running indoors on a treadmill.

In Conclusion

Running with asthma is not impossible by any means. It takes practice and planning. You can learn from my many years of trial and error. Even though these tips can potentially help, we suggest talking to your doctor before taking your first steps. They can efficiently guide you in the right direction to what is best for your health.