

SPORTS INJURY GUIDELINES

“The Winning Team for Your Athletic Health Care Needs”

Breathing Easy – Dealing with Asthma

Coaches of Asthmatics Can Breathe Easier

Coaches everywhere can log onto www.winningasthma.org to view a 30-minute interactive tutorial about asthma. This free educational tool not only explains asthma’s causes and symptoms, but lays out strategies for dealing with the disease.

What is asthma?

Asthma probably represents several conditions of the lung that have two components in common.

One is constriction of the smooth muscle lining the airways, which causes airway narrowing. The second is inflammation of the airways that leads to the production of mucus, which further clogs airways.

How is it diagnosed?

The definitive way to diagnose is by using spirometry, a technique of measuring lung volumes and airflows in and out of the lung.

In asthma, the constriction of the airways and mucus production causes air to be trapped in the lungs, and makes it difficult to exhale. A less sophisticated but very useful tool is the peak flow meter.

This simple device measures the force of airflow the athlete is able to generate while breathing out. A peak flow value less than 80 percent of “normal” is considered indicative of asthma.

Exercise-Induced Asthma

Symptoms and Triggers

If you have exercise-induced asthma, you may experience breathing difficulty within 5-20 minutes after exercise.

Symptoms include wheezing, chest tightness, coughing and chest pain. Other EIA symptoms include prolonged shortness of breath.

Treatment

Inhaled medications taken 15 minutes prior to exercise are helpful in controlling and preventing exercise-induced bronchospasm.

These medications are effective in 80 to 90 percent of patients, have a rapid onset of action, and last up to 4 to 6 hours. These medications can also be used to relieve symptoms associated with EIA after they occur.



Source: American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology