

Cycle 4 – Asthma

2401 - What Is Asthma?

SCRIPT

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MADELYN FERNSTROM, MD:

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that leads to breathing problems. Our lungs are like upside-down trees, with branches that carry oxygen into our bodies.

(2)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

We often use these models of breathing tubes to explain what's going on with asthma. Here's a normal breathing tube. Here's a breathing tube of someone with mild asthma, moderate asthma, and severe asthma.

There's a lot of differences, for example, between this wide open, normal breathing tube and this narrow breathing tube of someone with severe asthma. There's lots and lots of immune system cells right around in the wall of this breathing tube that are very active in releasing lots of chemicals that cause this lung to become sensitive, irritated, so that it triggers the urge to cough frequently, causes a lot of mucus to be produced. And that causes the tube to be further narrowed and makes it even more difficult to get air in and out.

When a patient's asthma gets bad, and their immune system is very active in releasing all these chemicals that are causing the problem, the muscles that are wrapped around the breathing tubes tend to tighten down causing the tube to become even more narrow.

(3)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

Generally speaking if you're having trouble, you're feeling like your chest is tight, your lungs are irritated, you're having trouble getting a deep breath, you're wheezing, you're making that kind of a high pitched noise as you breath in and out, those are the classic symptoms of asthma.

(4)

MADELYN FERNSTROM, MD:

Deep, hacking coughing is also a common asthma symptom in children and adults.

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MADELYN FERNSTROM, MD:

What are risk factors for developing asthma?

(6)

YANA SAMARASENA, MD:

There are risk factors for development of asthma. If there's asthma in the first-degree relatives, that puts someone at a higher risk for developing asthma. If they have other allergic disorders-- eczema, food allergies or nasal allergies-- they are at a higher risk for developing asthma.

(7)

WILLIAM CRAWFORD, MD:

Asthma's a very variable condition. So you can never really predict with any person what asthma's gonna be like for their life.

Asthma is what we call clinical diagnosis, which basically means you tell us what you're experiencing. We examine you. We listen to your heart, and your lungs, and we decide if you're likely to have asthma or not. There's no perfect test to diagnose asthma.

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MADELYN FERNSTROM, MD:

There is no cure for asthma, which is why good management of your condition is important to keep you breathing well.

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