

# Health & Wellbeing Newsletter

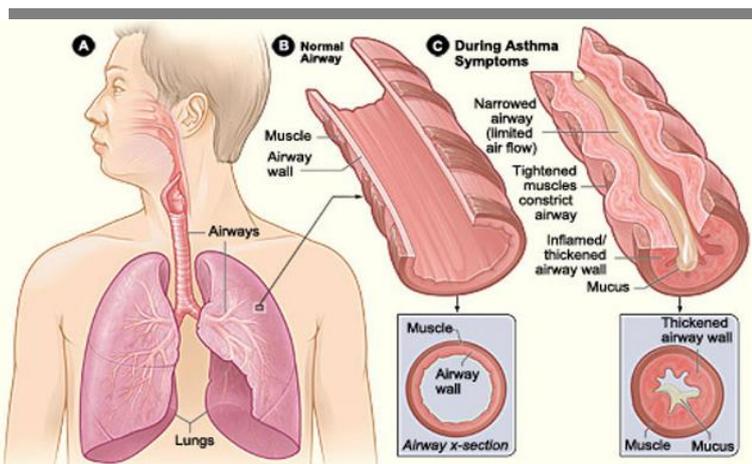
May June 2016

## World Asthma Day 5<sup>th</sup> MAY

Asthma is a common disease of the airways, the structures through which air passes when moving from your mouth and nose right down to the smallest structures in your lungs. Asthma is the most widespread chronic health problem in Australia. About one in ten Australian adults and one in nine or ten children have asthma. It is often associated with other allergic conditions like hay fever and eczema.

Asthma causes the muscles in the airways to tighten and the lining of the airway becomes swollen and inflamed, producing sticky mucous. These changes cause the airways to become narrow, making it difficult to breathe. Most people with asthma only have symptoms when they inhale a 'trigger' such as pollen, exercise without the right preparation, or catch a cold or flu.

Asthma cannot be cured, but with good management, people with asthma can lead normal, active lives. A range of programs and services are available to support people with asthma.



- The common signs of asthma are chest tightness and wheezing.
- Different triggers bring on asthma symptoms in different people.
- Asthma can be controlled with regular preventer medication every day (if prescribed) and using a reliever when symptoms flare up.
- An asthma attack can threaten life – call triple zero (000) for an ambulance in an emergency and tell the operator that someone is having an asthma attack.
- Find out more about asthma and its treatment – this will help you feel more confident to look after yourself or your child.
- A range of programs and services are available to support Australians with asthma.



[Contact us](#) or call **1800 ASTHMA**  
(1800 278 462)

*Insert practice details, news or events that you would like to share with your patients – or delete and leave blank*

### ALSO IN MAY

Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month  
10<sup>th</sup> World Lupus Day  
17<sup>th</sup> World Hypertension Day  
22<sup>nd</sup> Macular Degeneration Awareness Week  
24-30 National Palliative Care Week  
25<sup>th</sup> World Thyroid Day  
27<sup>th</sup> 65 Roses Day (cystic fibrosis)  
31<sup>st</sup> World No Tobacco Day

## June is Bowel Cancer Awareness month

Bowel cancer is also called colorectal cancer. It is diagnosed in about 3,700 Victorians and over 12,500 Australians every year. It mostly affects people 50 years of age and over, but it can happen in younger people. It is a serious disease, but if bowel cancer or its warning signs (polyps) are diagnosed early, it is often curable.

### Screening for bowel cancer

Ninety per cent of bowel cancer is curable if it is found early, before it has had a chance to spread.

Screening checks for health problems before they cause symptoms. Bowel cancer screening is looking for early changes in the bowel lining, or signs of a bowel cancer in healthy people who do not have symptoms.

The screening test that is used is called the faecal occult blood test (FOBT). This involves taking tiny samples from two separate bowel motions (poo) using a test kit. The samples are then posted to a laboratory for testing.

Everyone 50 and over should talk with their doctor about the screening tests, so that any signs of bowel cancer can be picked up early. The Cancer Council recommends doing a screening test every two years to protect you against bowel cancer. The Australian Government currently offers free FOBT kits to people turning 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 and 74. To be eligible for a free test, you need to have a Medicare card or a Veteran Affairs card.

For more information, see National Bowel Cancer Screening Program or phone 1800 118 868. You can also find out more about FOBTs and where to get one at the Cancer Council website.

- If you are 50 years of age or over, talk to your doctor about bowel cancer and screening.
- Most bowel cancers diagnosed at an early stage are curable.
- If you are at risk of bowel cancer, discuss with your doctor whether you need to have regular tests.
- You can reduce your risk of bowel cancer by eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy body weight, exercising regularly and not smoking.

Source: Better Health Channel

## Here are some tips for staying active in your senior years.

1. **Choose activities you find interesting and manageable.** You are more likely to stick to an exercise routine if it's fun.
2. **Check with your doctor before you start a new exercise routine.** Some activities may not be appropriate if you have been sedentary for a long time or suffer from obesity or a chronic illness.
3. **Start slowly and aim for small improvements.** Be guided by your doctor about how long and how frequently to exercise. Keep track of your progress in a training diary for added motivation.
4. **Make exercise a social event.** Invite friends along or sign up for a class so you can meet new people while getting fit.
5. **Improve your flexibility.** Suggestions include yoga, stretching exercises, lawn bowls or dancing.
6. **Build muscle tissue with strength training.** For example, you could lift weights or perform a modified form of calisthenics.
7. **Look after your bones.** Weight-bearing exercise can reduce your risk of bone loss and osteoporosis as you age.
8. **Improve your heart and lung fitness.** Opt for moderate intensity exercise for maximum benefit. As a general rule, aim for activity that means you breathe hard but are not left feeling breathless.
9. **Reduce your risk of falls.** Include some balance and coordination exercises in your weekly exercise routine. Good options include tai chi, balancing on one leg and heel to toe stands.
10. **Build exercise into your daily routine.** Walk to the shops or bus, spend more time in the garden or offer to walk a neighbour's dog.  
**Note: Always stop and seek medical advice if you experience chest pain, extreme breathlessness or dizziness.**