

The Link between Asthma & COPD

November celebrates COPD Awareness Month

Asthma is a leading chronic childhood disease affecting about 10 percent of the U.S. population, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a leading chronic adult disease, is currently the third leading cause of death and second leading cause of disability. Some people have both asthma and COPD. Studies show a direct correlation between severity of asthma as a child and the incidence of COPD. Meaning that children who suffer from severe, persistent asthma are nearly 32 times more likely to develop COPD in adulthood, where children with mild asthma were not at an increased risk.

Many people with long-standing asthma develop airway remodeling that causes a chronic irreversible airflow obstruction, or COPD. Many people who develop COPD will need to continue to treat the inflammation caused by their asthma as well as add treatments to manage the symptoms of COPD and retain as much lung function as possible. Here are some examples about similarities and difference between the two diseases:

Similarities:	Differences:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asthma and COPD are diseases of chronic inflammation of the airways that causes airflow obstruction. 2. Shortness of breath, wheeze and cough are symptoms experienced by both asthma and COPD patients. 3. Viral infections and exposure to tobacco smoke, indoor air pollution, environmental pollution, and occupational pollution can all cause an asthma or COPD exacerbation. 4. Asthma and COPD are both diagnosed through the use of breathing test called spirometry. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asthma is defined as an obstruction that is reversible, where COPD is an obstruction that is irreversible. 2. The inflammation occurring in asthma and COPD are different. Asthma is primarily caused by allergies, where COPD is caused by bacteria. 3. Asthma and COPD respond differently to anti-inflammatory medications due to the differences in inflammation. 4. The goal of treatment is different; asthma is treated to suppress chronic inflammation, where COPD is treated to reduce symptoms.

If you take an asthma medication, but feel that you still experience symptoms talk to your doctor about COPD. With the correct diagnosis you will receive treatments to address both your asthma and COPD to help you breathe better.

Smoking is the leading cause of COPD with smoking cessation cited as the best way to slow down the progression of COPD. Exposure to tobacco smoke is also a trigger for children with asthma and therefore parents who smoke should always be encouraged to quit, or at the least, not smoke around their child.

For information on the American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking program to help you quit smoking visit: <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/how-to-quit/freedom-from-smoking/>. For information on COPD visit: <http://www.lung.org/lung-disease/copd/> or call the Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNG-USA.

The Enhancing Asthma Care Project in Illinois is supported by Health Care Service Corporation's Healthy Kids, Healthy Families Initiative and lead by the American Lung Association in Chicago. This joint initiative aims to work with 15 clinics that serve high-risk populations to improve pediatric asthma care to an estimated 30,000 children in Illinois.