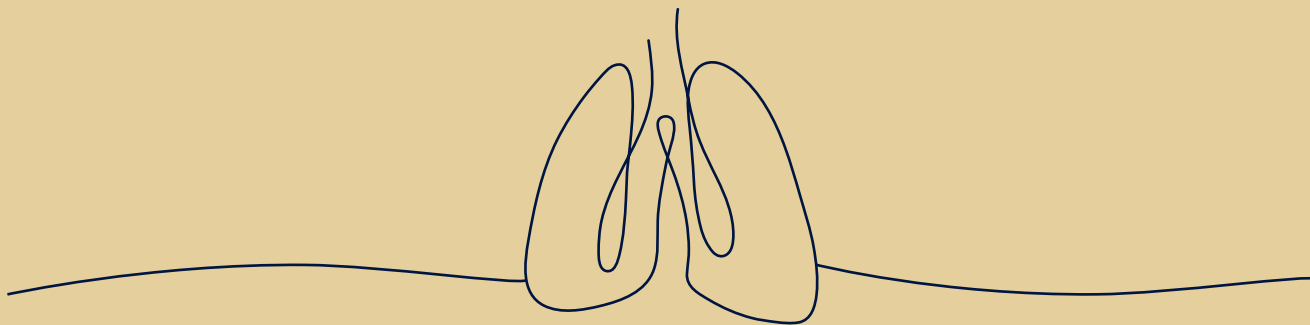


## GOOD HEALTH AND NUTRITION

## ASTHMA

**What is asthma?**

Asthma is a condition which occurs when the airways become inflamed and narrow, making it hard to breathe. It can cause episodes of wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness and coughing, particularly in the early morning and evening.

**IN AUSTRALIA, ASTHMA AFFECTS ONE IN 10 CHILDREN AND ADULTS, WHICH IS EQUIVALENT TO OVER TWO MILLION PEOPLE. UNDERSTANDING ASTHMA CAN HELP PREVENT ASTHMA SYMPTOMS AND HELP YOU ENJOY LIFE TO THE FULLEST.**

**What causes asthma?**

There is no known cause of asthma, but there are certain 'triggers' that can set off an asthma flare-up or asthma symptoms. The major triggers for asthma are allergens such as house dust mites, pollens, mould spores and animal hair or fur. Colds and viral infections are the most common triggers and tobacco smoke and cold air can also trigger symptoms. Exercise may also trigger asthma, but appropriate medication and warm-up exercises can usually control this.

Food is not a common trigger for asthma, however sulphite additives (preservatives and antioxidants used in some foods) have been associated with acute asthma symptoms, affecting about 3-10% of people with asthma.

**HOW CAN YOU AVOID ASTHMA TRIGGERS?**

A doctor can help work out what might trigger your asthma symptoms. It may be possible to avoid asthma triggers so it is important to discuss avoidance strategies with a doctor.

**Diet and asthma**

There is emerging evidence that healthy eating may contribute to airway health. Recent evidence shows that an antioxidant rich diet may help reduce the risk of asthma flare-ups and improve lung function. An antioxidant rich diet includes five servings of vegetables and two servings of fruit each day.

A healthy diet and being physically active is important for all people including those with asthma. An eating pattern that includes a wide variety of foods from across the five food groups will provide the range of nutrients people need. This means:

- Fill your plate with a variety of types and colours of vegetables; aim for five serves a day. Eat two serves of fruit a day.
- Select wholegrain rather than white/refined varieties of bread, pasta, noodles, breakfast cereals and rice.
- Choose lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds and legumes.
- Ensure you get at least the minimum recommended intake of foods from the dairy food group.
- Eat less junk (discretionary) foods and drinks such as fried potatoes, cakes and muffins, soft drinks, energy drinks and meat pies.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For more information visit [eatforhealth.gov.au](http://eatforhealth.gov.au)

## Dairy foods and asthma

Dairy foods have often been suggested as a common trigger for asthma, but there is little scientific evidence to support this myth. A review summarising the available evidence for the link between milk and asthma concluded: "current evidence does not directly link milk consumption and asthma". The National Asthma Council Australia also does not routinely recommend avoiding dairy foods as a way to manage asthma. They also advise that milk and dairy foods do not increase mucus.

Unfortunately, most Australians are missing out on the health benefits that come from consuming milk, cheese and yoghurt as they don't include enough dairy foods in their diet. It is estimated that eight out of 10 Australian adults and most Australian children need to increase their intake of the dairy food group in order to meet the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

Use the tables below to work out how many serves from the dairy food group are needed each day.

### Minimum recommended number of serves from the dairy food group

	Age (years)	No. of serves per day
Men	19–70	2 ½
	70+	3 ½
Women	19–50	2 ½
	50+	4
	Pregnant or breast feeding	2 ½
Boys	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	2
	9–11	2 ½
	12–18	3 ½
Girls	2–3	1 ½
	4–8	1 ½
	9–11	3
	12–18	3 ½

*Adapted from: 2013 Australian Dietary Guidelines. The dairy food group includes milk, cheese, yoghurt and/or alternatives.\**



\*Alternatives include: 250ml soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml.

For recipes and ideas on how to include adequate serves of dairy foods in your healthy eating plan visit [dairy.com.au/health](http://dairy.com.au/health)

Unless diagnosed with a specific allergy or intolerance to dairy foods by a medical practitioner, there is no reason to restrict or eliminate dairy from your diet. To achieve good asthma control, you should follow a written asthma action plan developed with your doctor.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on asthma visit the National Asthma Council Australia at [nationalasthma.org.au](http://nationalasthma.org.au)

