

Exercise Induced Bronchospasm (EIB)



EIB is a type of asthma that is sometimes called exercise induced asthma. It causes breathing problems during or after exercise.

People with EIB have very sensitive air tubes. Fast breathing during exercise causes the airways into the lungs to cool down and dry out. Quick changes in air temperature and moisture cause the air tubes to tighten and get smaller. Small air tubes make breathing harder. Air pollution, pollen, or mold spores breathed into the lungs during exercise can also cause breathing problems. People with allergies, sinus problems or a family history of allergies are more likely to have EIB. Many people with chronic asthma have EIB.

Signs of EIB

Breathing problems begin after you start exercise or 5-20 minutes after stopping exercise. The most common signs are:

- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Tiredness

How is EIB diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your breathing and do an exam, checking your heart and breathing. Tests may also be done.

- An **exercise challenge** test is done by measuring your breathing while you walk or run on a treadmill, or ride an exercise bicycle.
- A **eucapnic voluntary hyperventilation** test is done by breathing very fast into a tube that measures the amount of air going into and out of the lungs.

How is EIB treated?

EIB can be treated with medicine before exercise. Medicine in an inhaler is breathed into the lungs 15 minutes before exercise. The medicine quickly opens the air tubes and keeps them open for 4-6 hours. Using the inhaler medicine often prevents EIB. If the inhaler medicine before exercise does not work or if breathing problems get worse, talk to your doctor. You may need a change in medicine.

Besides the medicine, there are other things you can do to help prevent EIB.

- Warm up by stretching or walking slowly for 5-10 minutes before exercise.
- If the air is cool and dry, exercise indoors.
- Breathe through your nose during light exercise. The nose warms and adds moisture to air more than mouth-breathing.
- Wear a scarf or mask over your nose and mouth to warm the air before it goes into the lungs.
- If there is air pollution or ozone alert or pollen counts are high, exercise indoors.
- Talk to your doctor about allergy symptoms such as stuffy nose, sneezing, or itchy eyes.

What exercise is best?

Exercises and sports with rest periods cause less breathing problems. Baseball, softball, volleyball, tennis, downhill skiing, golf, surfing, football and some track and field events are often more easily done without breathing problems. Many athletes with EIB have reached the top of their game. EIB should not hold you back. You can do any activity with the proper training and medicine.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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