

# What is Asthma?

(15 Minutes)

**Purpose:** To teach community members the necessary facts about asthma

**Materials Needed:**

1. "The Asthma Flare-Up?" Handout
2. "Clues and Asthma Attack is Coming" Handout
3. Picture of the Lungs

**Teaching Points:** Use the teaching points and the handouts to educate community members the basics about asthma.

- Asthma is a disease of the lungs that can be controlled but not cured. If you have asthma, your airways can swell and tighten making it hard to breathe.
- When you breathe, air goes in and out of your lungs through small tubes called **airways**.
- An **asthma attack** (or flare-up) happens when your airways get smaller making it hard to breathe. When you have an asthma attack two things happen:
  1. The inside of the airways **swell** and fill with **mucus**
  2. The muscles around the airways **tighten**. This makes the airways smaller
- Before having an asthma attack, you often have **warning signs** that tell you that an asthma attack is coming. Everyone has different warning signs, but some of the most common ones are:
  - Wheezing
  - Getting out of breath
  - Tightness in the chest
  - Increased coughing
  - Breathing fast
  - Fast heart rate
- Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled by taking the right medication and removing asthma triggers.



**Facilitator's Note 1:**

Words in **ORANGE** are KEY WORDS that you should emphasize to the class.



**Additional Learning Activity:**

Teach the parents and children about how an asthma attack happens by giving them drinking straws to breathe through. Have them squeeze the straw to feel what happens when the airways tighten during an asthma attack.