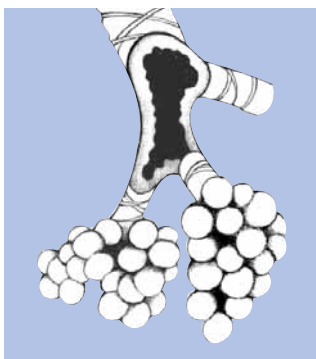
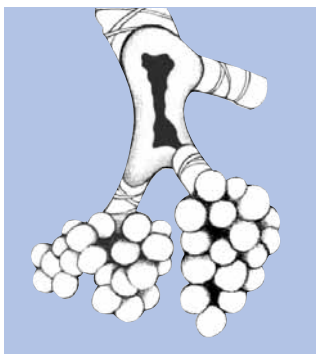


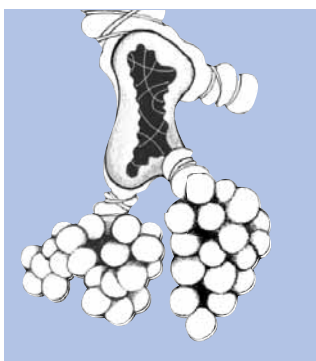
What is Asthma?



Normal airway



Puffy and swollen airway



Airways squeezed by muscles

Asthma (az-ma) is a disease of the airways. The airways are the tubes inside the lungs that carry air. With asthma, these tubes become puffy and swollen. This makes it hard to move air in and out. Sometimes the airways become squeezed by the muscles around them. This blocks the airways so that air can't move in and out at all. Asthma also causes the body to produce extra amounts of thick fluid called mucus. This too can block the airways. When airways are blocked, it is very hard to breathe. This is called an asthma attack.

Asthma is a chronic disease. This means that once you have asthma, you will always have it. However, asthma doesn't affect you the same each day. Sometimes things you breathe can make it worse, such as tobacco smoke. Sometimes things you do can make it worse, such as running hard. There are also many things you can do to keep asthma from bothering you.