

# Facts About Conditions That May Impact Your Asthma

**FACT** There are more than a dozen medical conditions that can impact the severity and control of asthma, including allergic rhinitis (hay fever), aspirin-exacerbated respiratory disease (AERD), bronchiectasis, eczema, food allergies, gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), obesity, obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), psychological conditions, and vocal cord dysfunction.

**Ask your doctor if other medical conditions are affecting your asthma, particularly if your asthma is uncontrolled.**

**FACT** A majority of people with asthma experience symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux (GERD). While it's not entirely clear why GERD impacts asthma, it is thought that reflux may cause airways to constrict in response to gastric fluid coming up into the back of your mouth (vocal cords) and even into the lungs.

**If GERD symptoms are present in asthmatics, treatment can improve respiratory symptoms.**

**FACT** There is a correlation between asthma and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which affects 22 million Americans. It is not known why or how OSA impacts asthma, but it may cause both lung and systemic airway inflammation, which can increase the symptoms of asthma.

**Ask if your doctor if you have any symptoms or risk factors for sleep apnea.**

**FACT** Obese adults were more likely than those with normal weight to report more exacerbations and worse asthma control and quality of life. Obesity also may worsen sleep apnea and reflux, two other conditions that impact asthma.

**Losing weight and exercise programs have shown to improve asthma symptoms.**

**FACT** Psychological factors and strong emotions may trigger asthma symptoms and may distract patients from using their asthma medications regularly. In fact, they are more common in people with asthma than in the general population. Having a chronic condition, such as asthma, may also worsen anxiety or depression.

**Always report any anxiety or depression symptoms to your doctor. Treatment of these conditions may help with your asthma care.**

## MYTH

Asthma is an illness that is not influenced by other medical conditions.

## MYTH

Asthma and stomach problems have nothing to do with each other.

## MYTH

Sleep disorders don't affect asthma.

## MYTH

Being overweight doesn't make my asthma any worse.

## MYTH

The anxiety and depression I experience with asthma do not make my asthma any worse.

Learn more at [foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-resources/asthma](https://foundation.chestnet.org/patient-education-resources/asthma)

If you have any of these conditions, be sure to talk to your asthma specialist about them so that you obtain a coordinated, up-to-date and effective treatment plan.

Source for much of this content:  
Influence of comorbid conditions on asthma. Eur Respir J. 2009;33:897-906; DOI: 10.1183/09031936.00121308.<https://erj.ersjournals.com/content/33/4/897>

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