

Beatrice: I would cough, every other word cough, or trying to get enough air to be able to speak more than three words, a phrase.

Dr Sanjay Gupta: Beatrice Heist was diagnosed with asthma and in that moment she joined 20 million other Americans suffering from the chronic lung disease that causes coughing, chest tightness⁽¹⁾, shortness of breath⁽²⁾ and wheezing⁽³⁾.

Dr David Gross: The airways⁽⁴⁾ get inflamed and when they're inflamed they tend to react and constrict⁽⁵⁾.

Gupta: It can happen at any age although it's more common in children. Now, there are a number of triggers⁽⁶⁾ that can bring out an attack: allergens like pollen, animal dander⁽⁷⁾ or environmental irritants like cigarette smoke and air pollution, even exercise. A recent study found living in certain cities like Atlanta, Philadelphia and Milwaukee presents bigger challenges for asthma sufferers in part due to those triggers plus restaurants, bars and workplaces that still allow smoking. Doctors say even mild asthma can be life-threatening⁽⁸⁾.

In fact, every day, there are 5,000 asthma-related emergency room visits and 11 deaths. Every day! There's no cure, so giving the proper treatment is crucial.

Dr Gross: With care, we think most of those asthma attacks are preventable but, unfortunately, not all of them are. Some can be incredibly acute.

Gupta: The standard care is medication, mainly in the form of inhaled steroids.

Dr Gross: It's really our main line of attack against asthma and they're very successful and very safe when they're used. And the side effects are very low as well.

Gupta: Beatrice says after just six months on medication her symptoms improved significantly.

Beatrice: Less coughing and a better quality of life. I feel like I'm living.

Gupta: So what exactly is an asthma attack? Well, during an attack, the airways narrow, the already swollen bronchial tubes become even more inflamed and thick mucus is produced in those bronchial tubes.

Presenter: Now, Sanjay's mentioned some of the triggers for an asthma attack including allergens, environmental irritants, even exercise. Some others are reflux disease, certain foods, medications and even anxiety. But everyone's triggers are different, so if you could recognize and avoid your triggers you could be making a huge step in managing your asthma.

CNN.

Lexical helpline:

1. **tightness:** without sufficient space to move
2. **shortness of breath (s.o.b.):** difficulty breathing, breathlessness
3. **wheezing:** noisy and difficult breathing
4. **airways:** the passage for air from the nose or mouth to the lungs
5. **constrict (v):** become narrower
6. **trigger (n):** a stimulus that sets off a process
7. **dander:** material that comes from the skin, hair of animals
8. **life-threatening (adj):** very dangerous with the possibility of death as an outcome