

Can asthma be cured? Is it ever fatal?

Q: I have asthma. Is there a cure? Can it cause death?

A: "Asthma is a chronic disease that inflames and restricts the lung's airways," says Ali Al-Himyary, M.D., a board-certified specialist in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine with Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. "It cannot be cured, but with regular physician care, most people can control the symptoms and live active lives.

"If left untreated, it can decrease physical activities and limit normal lifestyle endeavors,"

Dr. Al-Himyary says.

Symptoms include wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble breathing, especially at night and in the early morning.

"In the most severe cases," Dr. Al-Himyary warns, "asthma can lead to death."

Deaths, however, are rare and usually preventable.

"Fatalities are usually caused by a lack of proper medical care or the improper use of medicines," says Dr. Al-Himyary who sees asthma patients at his Kelsey-Seybold St. Luke's Medical Tower office and Kelsey-Seybold's The Woodlands Clinic.

Asthma attacks may be triggered by a combination of things including tobacco smoke, air pollutants, climate changes,



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AL-HIMYARY, M.D.

infections, and allergic reactions to such things as dust, pollen and animal dander.

"We also know that a patient's genetic background plays a significant role," Dr. Al-Himyary says.

Medical treatment can help.

"A pulmonary specialist can workup an individualized and comprehensive asthma control plan."

Treatment includes oral medicines, inhalants, allergy shots and working closely with a doctor to identify and avoid asthma triggers.

"With proper treatment, athletes with asthma have been able to control their symptoms and compete in the Olympics."

Call 713-442-7587 to schedule an appointment or to find a physician at Kelsey-Seybold Clinic.

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