

BREATHLESS?

Exercise-induced asthma may be the reason

Does exercise leave you coughing, wheezing and gasping for breath? If so, you may not simply be out of shape. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, about 15 percent of the population suffers from exercise-induced asthma (EIA)—a treatable condition in which a person who does not normally have asthma develops symptoms during or shortly after strenuous physical activity.

Linda D. Guydon, M.D., of Atlanta Allergy and Asthma Clinic, says some experts believe that EIA is a form of uncontrolled chronic asthma; others think it's a separate condition.

When you exercise, your airways are depleted of moisture, making the air in your bronchial tubes cool and dry. In some people, that cool, dry air causes lungs to squeeze and spasm. If you think you might have EIA, Guydon recommends seeing an asthma specialist and offers the following ways to control this condition:

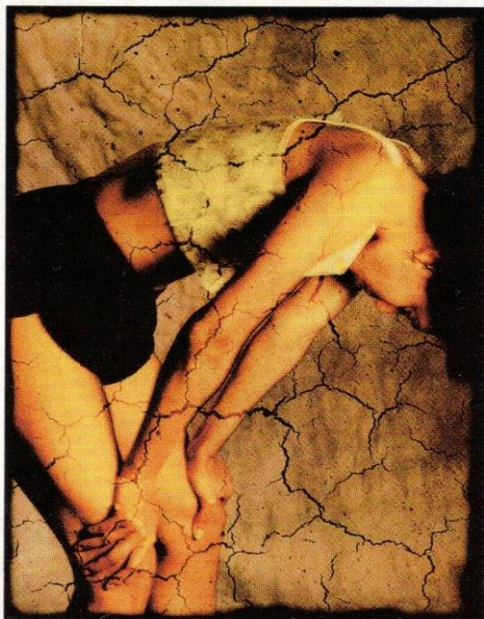
■ **Warm up.** Before beginning a workout, do a series of 30-second sprints separated by two-minute rests "to build up tolerance for activity," says Guydon.

■ **Inhale.** Your doctor can prescribe a medication that, if inhaled 15 to 20 minutes before exercise, helps relax the smooth muscles in the bronchial tubes.

■ **Work out wisely.** Walk instead of running, or simply decrease your workout intensity. Swimming, especially in an

indoor pool with moist, warm air, is recommended because it calls for slow, rhythmic breathing. Baseball, football, golf and karate are also wise choices because they require short bursts of activity.

—MICHELLE LONGO



HEALTH WATCH

Summer Cooling No-no

Many of us chew ice for heat relief, but this puts undue stress on teeth, says Richard Price, D.M.D., a consumer adviser with the American Dental Association. "Besides being very hard, ice cubes cause the enamel to contract, which can eventually fracture a tooth," says Price. If you're looking for something cool, try a fresh-fruit smoothie instead.

Never Too Early

Researchers conducting the Bogalusa Heart Study in Bogalusa, Louisiana, have found that some young adults show signs of arterial hardening. If you're 20 or older and your cholesterol is higher than 200, you should lower your fat intake and increase exercise to reduce your risk of heart attack.

Not Just for Bones

Calcium-rich foods (dried beans, broccoli, spinach, collards) may help reduce preeclampsia, or pregnancy-induced hypertension. According to a study published in *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, a daily calcium intake equaling three glasses of milk could keep expectant mothers' blood pressure in check. This is key for Black women, who may have a higher risk of dying from this form of hypertension.

KNOCKOFF PRESCRIPTIONS Is there really a difference?

When a pharmacist offered Willeth Boyce generic birth-control pills, she said, "No way." The 31-year-old New York City native wanted to be sure they worked. But she needn't have worried.

John Hambright, Pharm.D., of Lincoln Family Pharmacy in Stockton, California, says generic drugs are virtually no different from the brand-name product because the Food and Drug Administration requires the same chemical composition.

Generics become available only after the original drug's patent has expired (most FDA patents are in effect for 17 years). "Many drugs have no generic," says Hambright. Of those that do, the main difference is price: Generic manufacturers can charge 20 to 30 percent less.



WOMAN, DAVID MORGAN. ASPIRIN, CHARLES THATCHER/STONE