

Triggers and Contributing Factors

Exercise, stress, and cold air commonly trigger Dysfunctional Breathing (DB). Some medical conditions like nasal congestion, asthma, reflux, depression and anxiety make DB worse. Your medical care team will ask about triggers and other conditions to help you manage your DB.

Dysfunctional Breathing (DB) and Asthma

DB is often mistaken as asthma since it has similar symptoms and triggers. However, DB is a different condition and usually does not fully respond to asthma treatment. DB can occur in patients with or without asthma. DB can occur even when your asthma is well-controlled.

Breathing Well

With treatment, Dysfunctional Breathing (DB) can improve and you can return to normal activities. Practicing 'breathing well' exercises is key to your recovery. Successful DB recovery occurs when symptoms, underlying conditions, and triggers are all addressed. You may be referred to other therapists and health care providers for assessment and support. Develop a DB management plan together with your health care team.

Alberta Children's Hospital

Asthma Clinic

Find out
more about
'Breathing
Well' here



Breathing Well

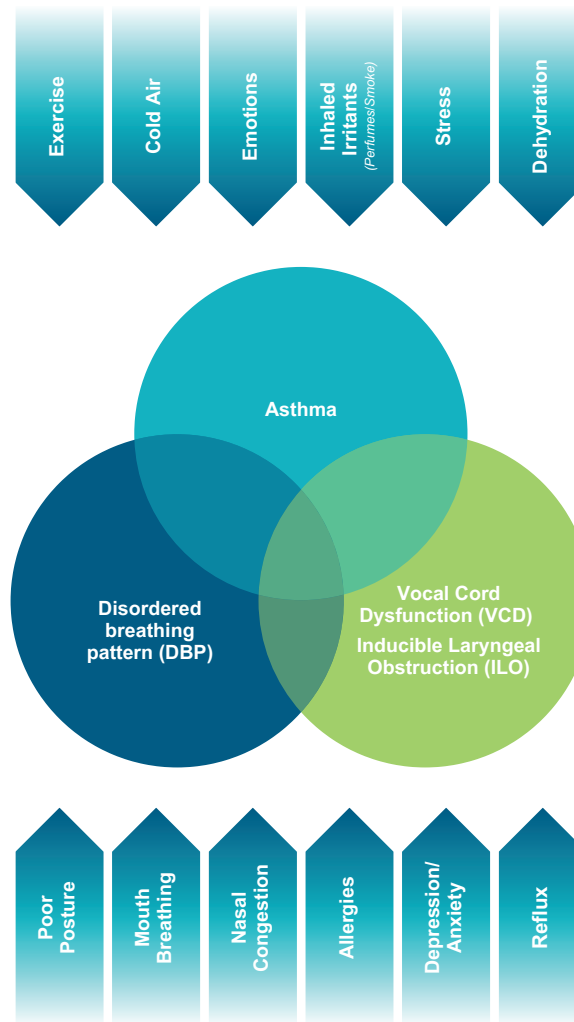
Asthma Clinic
Alberta Children's Hospital



What is Dysfunctional Breathing?

Dysfunctional breathing (DB) is a common cause of 'breathlessness' attacks. These episodes may begin suddenly and can be very frightening. You may experience chest or throat tightening or feel unable to take a breath in. Some people also have noisy breathing, voice changes, coughing, and feel panicky. Untreated DB may prevent your participation in every day activities. Although especially common in adolescence, DB can occur at any age.

There are different types of DB. You may experience 'Disordered Breathing Patterns' where your breathing rate or way of breathing changes when exposed to a trigger. Your breathing may become too fast or too shallow. Sometimes your chest may not expand well or you may breath only through your mouth. Some people have a type of DB known as 'Vocal Cord Dysfunction' (VCD) or 'Inducible Laryngeal Obstruction' (ILO) that occurs when the vocal cords (*larynx*) or nearby muscles squeeze together causing a feeling of breathlessness. Normally, when you breathe in, your vocal cords open like curtains so air flows into your lungs. With VCD, your vocal cords open only a little. Since vocal cords are soft and flexible, some air gets through but it is much harder to breathe and some people say it "feels like I'm breathing through a straw."



DB Management or 'Breathing Well'

BREATH RETRAINING

RECOVERY BREATHING

NASAL CARE

MEDITATION/MINDFULNESS

VOICE COACHING

HYDRATION

ASTHMA CONTROL

MANAGE STRESS

TREAT ACID REFLUX

POSTURE & STRETCHING

EVENT JOURNAL/VIDEO