



Thunderstorm asthma

What is thunderstorm asthma?

Thunderstorm asthma happens when strong winds from a thunderstorm cause lots of particles, like grass pollen, to be blown across an area. People allergic to the pollen in this area can get severe asthma.

Asthma can make it difficult to breathe and it can be life-threatening.

Thunderstorm asthma is rare, but will most likely occur during late spring and early summer – November to January – when pollen counts are high in the ‘pollen season’.

Has thunderstorm asthma happened in Tasmania?

No thunderstorm asthma events have been recorded in Tasmania although it is possible that thunderstorm asthma conditions could occur here. High pollen loads from trees, weeds and grasses occur in all parts of the state during spring and summer.

Who is at risk of thunderstorm asthma?

Thunderstorm asthma usually affects people who have seasonal hay fever or allergic asthma, but it can affect people who have never had asthma before.

It’s important for people with hay fever or asthma to know about thunderstorm asthma and what they can do to help protect themselves during the pollen season.

What can I do to reduce the risks of thunderstorm asthma?

- If you have hay fever, and especially if you have wheezing and coughing with your hay fever, talk to your GP about your symptoms. Do this before the pollen season starts.
- If you've ever had asthma, talk to your GP about what you can do to help protect yourself. Taking an asthma preventer properly and regularly is key to preventing asthma, including thunderstorm asthma.
- Learn to recognise asthma symptoms in yourself and others, and learn how to do asthma first aid.
- Get to know your local pollen. A free **AirRater app** shows daily pollen counts across Tasmania. It can help you identify which types of pollen (or other triggers like outdoor smoke) can make your symptoms worse. Visit www.airrater.org for more information and to download the app.
- If you have wheezing, shortness of breath, chest tightness or continuing coughing, then you may have asthma. Talk to your GP.
- If you need urgent medical care, call an ambulance on triple zero (000).

Where can I get more information?

Better health channel: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/thunderstorm-asthma

Asthma Australia: www.asthma.org.au

Asthma Australia also have a free help and advice line: 1800 278 462 (1800 ASTHMA)