

## Health & Fitness Tips

### ASTHMA - Take a deep breath

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The ADF has recently changed entry medical standards for applicants with asthma.

People with well-controlled, mild, persistent or intermittent asthma can now join the ADF. These members are allocated a Medical Employment Classification (MEC) 2, and will be able to undertake recruit and initial employment training.

In line with these changes, members with well-controlled asthma will be medically fit for operational deployment with some caveats, such as the need to deploy with appropriate medication and medical support, depending on their Service.

The entry standard for specialist employment categories has not changed.



#### What is asthma?

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways, causing recurrent symptoms, including wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness and coughing, particularly at night or in the early morning. Excessive airway narrowing and airflow obstruction are caused by contraction of the airway smooth muscle and inflammation of the wall of the airway. Common triggers for the inflammatory process in asthma include: allergy, viral respiratory infections, some medications and non-specific stimuli such as cold air exposure and exercise.

#### Don't ignore signs

Asthma is a manageable condition. By developing an action plan and working with your doctor to manage your asthma, you remain in control. Early diagnosis and treatment provide you with the best possible outcome. Ignoring symptoms or warning signs can result in serious consequences, including death. If you are concerned that you may be exhibiting signs and symptoms of asthma, see your doctor for a comprehensive assessment.

#### Take control

Management strategies for any situation form the basis of an asthma action plan. This personalised action plan is developed in consultation with your doctor and is tailored to your individual needs. Around 10 per cent of ADF members currently have asthma. All ADF members with asthma should have an asthma action plan, which will help them recognise if their asthma is getting worse and be able to take steps to prevent further deterioration.

#### Be proactive

Education and compliance with treatment are key factors in the management of asthma, and have led to a much lower incidence of serious illness as a result. Self-education about the nature of the disease helps sufferers understand the need for different types of medication in asthma management. It is your responsibility to take a proactive approach to the management of your asthma and be in control. It is important to know what triggers asthma, to avoid these triggers wherever possible and to recognise the warning signs that indicate when the condition is deteriorating, and take the appropriate action.

The policies outlining the revised standards for asthma in the ADF are: Health Bulletin 2/2007 *Standards for Entry to the ADF for Applicants Diagnosed with Asthma*. Health Directive 283 *The Management of Asthma in the ADF*. DEFGRAM 430/2007 *New Entry and Serving Standards for Personnel with Asthma*.