You’ve noticed lately that you’re often wheezing, coughing, and short of breath—the same kind of symptoms your child with asthma has. But you’ve never had lung problems, and asthma is a childhood disease, right?

Not necessarily. Although many people develop asthma when they are young, symptoms associated with asthma can appear at any time.

When you develop breathing problems as an adult, you might be diagnosed with what is known as adult-onset asthma, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA).

**Adult-onset asthma** Asthma is a common disease in which the airways to your lungs become swollen and narrow—making it hard to breathe.

Unlike children, who often experience only periodic asthma symptoms, adults with newly diagnosed asthma generally have more persistent asthma symptoms.

The AAFA says symptoms of adult-onset asthma may include:

➤ A dry cough, especially at night
➤ Tightness or pressure in your chest
➤ Difficulty breathing
➤ Wheezing
➤ Shortness of breath after exercise
➤ Colds that go to your chest and linger for 10 days or more

It’s not known what causes asthma. Most, but not all, people with asthma have allergies. But asthma symptoms may also be triggered by exercise, exposure to cold temperatures, medications, and environmental factors, such as cigarette smoke.

Women are more likely than men to develop asthma as adults. Obesity also appears to significantly increase your risk for developing adult-onset asthma, according to the AAFA.

**Living with asthma** To determine if you have asthma, your doctor will ask you questions about your symptoms and give you a physical exam.

Your lungs may also be tested with a peak-flow meter, a device used to measure the amount of air you can expel from your lungs.

No matter how old you are, the key to successfully treating your asthma is a good management plan.

To better manage asthma, the AAFA says you should:

➤ Learn about the disease and stay up-to-date on new developments.
➤ Take medications as prescribed by your doctor. These may include drugs that decrease swelling or relax your airways. Asthma medications may be inhaled or taken orally or intravenously.
➤ Visit your doctor regularly to have your lungs tested.
➤ Make sure your asthma management plan tells you what to do if your symptoms get worse.

Untreated, asthma can be very serious. But if you work with your doctor and follow your management plan, you can live an active life with asthma.