

Overview

If you have had a negative lung function test you do not meet the requirements to apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) to use inhaled beta-2 agonist medication.

Beta-2 agonist inhalers are typically coloured blue, green or purple. If you are using one of these inhalers following a negative test you are at risk of committing an anti-doping rule violation if drug tested as this medication is prohibited from use in sport.



What your options are

Option 1: Undertake a different test

A negative lung function test does not automatically mean that you do not have asthma or exercise induced asthma (EIA). Asthma or EIA can be triggered in a variety of ways and there are different tests that can be undertaken to trigger your symptoms to gain TUE approval.

Option 2: Consider that you do not have asthma or EIA

It is not uncommon to have been missed diagnosed with asthma or EIA. Many athletes only experience breathing problems during training or competition and it is difficult to gain an accurate diagnosis if the athlete is not presenting with symptoms at the time they see their doctor. Research has shown that a lung function test is required as objective evidence to confirm asthma or EIA as symptoms alone cannot be relied upon to make an accurate diagnosis.

It is likely that you do not have asthma or EIA if you are unable to present with a positive test. Many other conditions linked with the heart and lungs have similar symptoms to asthma or EIA and it is vital for your health and performance that these are eliminated by consulting your doctor.

Alternative reasons for asthma-like symptoms during exercise: Inefficient breathing

It is not uncommon for athletes to have inefficient breathing patterns when exercising at intense levels. Athletes who are inefficient at breathing typically find it hard to breathe air in and this usually results in them not getting a satisfying breath (see Table 1). There are different factors that can cause inefficient breathing:

- > Vocal chord dysfunction
- > Inspiratory stridor
- > Breathing technique
- > Posture
- > Psychological

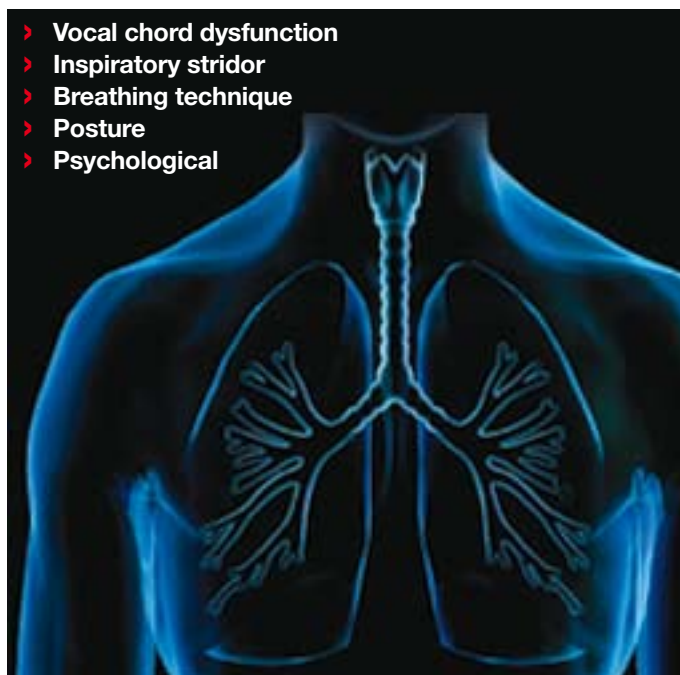




Table 1: Symptom comparison between EIA and inefficient breathing

SYMPTOM CHECKLIST	EXERCISE INDUCED ASTHMA	INEFFICIENT BREATHING
When are the symptoms present?	Usually 5-10 minutes after exercise	During exercise and resolves within 5 minutes of stopping exercise
When does wheezing occur?	When breathing out	When breathing in
Where does the wheeze originate from?	Sound is primarily from the chest	Sound originates in the neck
Is there a change in maximal lung function?	Reduced after exercise	No reduction after exercise
Does asthma medication reduce symptoms?	Symptoms reduce/disappear after inhaling beta-2 agonist	No response to inhaled beta-2 agonist treatment

There are appropriate therapy routes and specialist centres that can help reduce or eliminate symptoms associated with inefficient breathing to help you return to training and competition optimally. It is worth considering all of the factors which may cause inefficient breathing and work with your doctor to arrive at the appropriate solution. Specialist centres can be found by contacting UK Sport.

Acknowledgement

UK Sport would like to thank John Dickinson for his contribution in producing this leaflet. John is a respiratory assessment specialist in the screening of elite athletes for asthma and EIA. Through his work with the Olympic Medical Institute, English Institute of Sport, and Carnegie Centre of Performance and Wellbeing he has screened over a 1000 athletes.

