

Thunderstorms + high pollen counts
= Potential Danger

Thunderstorm Asthma

Thunderstorms in summer can trigger sudden, severe asthma attacks in adults who are allergic to grass pollen and have hay fever (with or without asthma). This phenomenon is rare, but can be very dangerous. Here's why:

- Pollen grains are too large to get into our lungs, but when a thunderstorm is brewing, updrafts of air can lift pollen up into the clouds
- When exposed to airborne moisture, pollen grains rupture into tiny pieces
- These pollen fragments return to ground level as a "pollen shower" that can be inhaled deep into people's lungs. They are highly allergenic (i.e. high risk of triggering allergic reactions) and can trigger severe asthma attacks.

What to do if thunderstorms develop when pollen counts are high (especially if you have asthma)



Stay indoors. Keep doors and windows closed before, and during, the storm



If you have to go outside, wear a mask to avoid inhaling pollen fragments



Good control of asthma (and hay fever) reduces the risk: if you are prescribed a regular "preventer" inhaler, take it!



If you have an asthma attack during a thunderstorm, take a double-dose of antihistamine



If you do develop a sudden severe asthma attack, take 4 puffs of your "reliever" inhaler, and wait 4 minutes. If no improvement, repeat*



If two sets of 4 puffs of your reliever doesn't help, call 999 and continue to take 4 puffs of your reliever every 4 mins till help arrives*