

# Healthy You

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# Take Charge of Asthma

Tips, hints and support to help you manage your health



## New Lease on Life

New procedure helps Carlos Ortiz manage severe asthma

**Carlos Ortiz was always very active.** The 65-year-old Allentown man (above) loved riding his motorcycle, running after his grandchildren, and playing football, softball and baseball. Although he was diagnosed with asthma when he was born, the condition had been manageable since age 7. But five years ago, Ortiz's asthma resurfaced. "I went to many different doctors and tried different medications and treatments, but it kept getting worse," he says. "I couldn't even go to the gym anymore." He had such trouble breathing, he began using a walker and cane. Last October, he suffered an asthma attack so severe he was hospitalized for eight days.

That's when Ortiz turned to pulmonologist Robert Krukltis, MD, PhD, with Lehigh Valley Health Network.

"He went through everything with me step by step," Ortiz says. "I knew he was the right doctor for me. He changed my medications, and I felt better."

Then Ortiz suffered another asthma attack in January that left him hospitalized for nine days. So Krukltis recommended a new procedure—bronchial thermoplasty. Here's how it works:

- A long, flexible tube with a camera (called a bronchoscope) is inserted into the mouth and guided down the airway.
- Thermal energy (heat) is delivered through the bronchoscope to the airway wall. This reduces the excessive airway muscle that contributes to breathing problems in people with asthma.

- The procedure is performed three times, with each appointment scheduled at three-week intervals. Patients are sedated during the procedure.

Because Ortiz had severe, persistent asthma, and because medication changes didn't help his breathing, he was a perfect candidate for bronchial thermoplasty. He felt better immediately after the first treatment. "I was walking and biking two days later," he says.

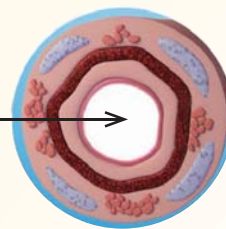
Bronchial thermoplasty doesn't cure asthma, but it does improve the condition and create fewer emergencies. "Patients will still need to use their asthma medications, but should have fewer attacks and therefore will miss less work or school," Kruklytis says. "It gives people a sense of control over their asthma."

That's exactly how Ortiz feels. He can't wait to get back on his motorcycle and resume his gym routine. "I can't stop moving," he says.

## What Is Asthma?

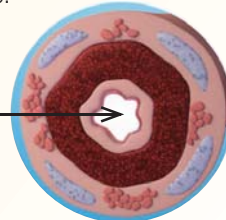
Wheezing. Coughing. Shortness of breath. Chest tightness. Millions of people with asthma regularly experience these feelings. Asthma, an inflammation of the airways in the lungs, is a chronic lung disease that affects people of all ages. Here's what it looks like:

- **If you don't have asthma,** your airways are clear and lined with smooth muscle.



- **If you have asthma,** your airways are lined with thicker, more reactive muscle.

- **When an asthma attack occurs,** the thickened muscle constricts, making it difficult to breathe.



Allergies, cold air, tobacco smoke, viral infections or exercise can trigger asthma attacks. People with asthma often use long-term "maintenance" inhalers daily and short-term "rescue" inhalers as needed in case of attacks.

**TAKE CHARGE NOW**

- **Call 610-402-CARE** to find the right doctor who can help care for asthma and other medical needs.