



Asthma is an inflammation of the bronchial tubes¹ that is not difficult to treat, even though doctors cannot cure it. The (1) is to control the underlying inflammation, usually with corticosteroid drugs. (2) makes the disease so dangerous is that it can kill in a matter of minutes. Every (3) and again, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the bronchial tubes overreact to the (4) of allergens. The walls of the airways (5), shutting off the supply of oxygen to the heart, the brain, and the rest of the body.

The number of Americans diagnosed with asthma has grown alarmingly in the past several years. Since 1990, the number of (6) has jumped 50%. Even more (7), the death rate has (8) sharply since 1979. No one knows for sure what is behind the increase. (9) a prime suspect is the greater amount of time people spend in tightly sealed, air-conditioned workplaces and homes, where they are exposed to (10) irritants as dust mites² and pet dander.³

¹ bronchial tubes – tiny passages in the lungs that aid in breathing

² dust mites – tiny spiderlike parasites that live in dust

³ dander – flakes of skin found in the fur or hair of pets

1. a. disease
b. key
2. a. That
b. Although
3. a. then
b. once
4. a. lack
b. demands
5. a. constrict
b. expand
6. a. circumstances
b. instants
7. a. reassuringly
b. alarming
8. a. risen
b. dropped
9. a. while
b. because
10. a. such
b. as

c. doctor
d. diagnosis

c. What
d. It

c. while
d. now

c. disease
d. presence

c. elongate
d. hurt

c. cases
d. situations

c. concerned
d. often

c. been
d. increasing

c. so
d. but

c. the
d. many