



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 pet dander - flakes of skin found in the fur or hair of pets

1. a. disease c. doctor
b. key d. diagnosis
2. a. That c. What
b. Although d. It
3. a. then c. while
b. once d. now
4. a. lack c. disease
b. demands d. presence
5. a. constrict c. elongate
b. expand d. hurt
6. a. circumstances c. cases
b. instants d. situations
7. a. reassuringly c. concerned
b. alarming d. often
8. a. risen c. been
b. dropped d. increasing
9. a. while c. so
b. because d. but
10. a. such c. the
b. as d. many