

Treatment and Prevention

Continued...

Asthma Management Plan

Every person who has asthma needs a written asthma management plan developed with the help of a doctor. For children, it is important that this plan is shared with teachers and caregivers. An asthma management plan should include:

A list of your triggers

Since every person with asthma has a different set of triggers, it is important to know which ones affect you. Being aware of these triggers will help you avoid them and prevent future attacks.

Environmental controls

Every plan should include ways to reduce triggers in your environment, such as using the air conditioner or closing the windows when pollen counts are high.

Your early warning signs

You should also identify any warning signs that appear before an attack, such as



changes in your mood, appearance or breathing. A peak flow meter, which measures how well air is moving in your lungs, can help you check your breathing on a daily basis. When you notice any signs, it is important to stop what you are doing, rest, get away from any possible triggers and make sure your medicine is close by.

Medication information

Your plan should include a list of the medicines you are taking as well as when and how to take your medicine.

What to do during an attack

An asthma management plan will also help you cope during an attack. Be sure that you stay calm, practice your breathing and take your medicine correctly. If your asthma becomes worse, be prepared to get medical help immediately.

To learn more about asthma programs in your area, contact your local Breathe California office at 1-877-3-BREATHE.



1-877-3-BREATHE
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Breathe California
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Asthma



FAST FACT

Close to 4.5 million Californians suffer from asthma, including 14% of all children under 18.

Source: California Department of Health Services

What is Asthma?

Asthma is a chronic lung disease caused by inflammation of the airways. When someone with asthma is exposed to certain “triggers,” they may have an asthma attack. During attacks, symptoms may include coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and in extreme cases, even death. While there is no cure for asthma, most people can learn to control their asthma to lead full and active lives.

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How Do You Develop Asthma?

There is no single cause for asthma. Yet, studies have shown that a number of factors may make a person more likely to get asthma. This includes:

- Having a family history of asthma
- Being around secondhand smoke
- Living in areas with high smog levels

You can also get asthma at any age or without any of the above risk factors. If you think that you may have asthma, you should visit your doctor right away. To see if you have asthma, your doctor will ask you questions about your family and medical history, and may also perform a physical exam, spirometry or allergy testing.

What Causes an Attack?

When someone who has asthma comes in contact with certain triggers, the airways can narrow, swell and/or make more mucus. These reactions cut down the airflow in the lungs and may cause an asthma attack (see “During an Attack”). Every person with asthma has a different set of triggers, but some of the more common asthma triggers include:

- Infections, such as a cold or flu
- Pollen, mold, pet dander, dust mites or other things people are allergic to
- Air pollution, tobacco smoke or strong odors from perfumes and cleaning solutions
- Exercise or other physical activities
- Weather, especially cold, dry air or high humidity
- Strong emotions, including anxiety and stress

FAST FACT

Asthma is the number one chronic cause of school absenteeism and the third-leading cause of hospitalization among children each year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



During an Attack

As it becomes harder for air to get into the lungs, a person may suffer a number of symptoms. This is known as an asthma attack. The length, type and severity of these symptoms can vary from person to person. In addition, the same person may have different symptoms from one attack to another.

Coughing and wheezing are the most common symptoms of an asthma attack. Asthma sufferers may also have chest pain, tightness in the chest and shortness of breath. If untreated, an asthma attack can become a medical emergency that requires treatment in a hospital. In extreme cases, an asthma attack may even result in death.

Treatment and Prevention

The good news is that by working to keep your asthma under control, you can lead a healthy and active lifestyle. With the right medicine and a solid asthma control plan, you can have fewer and less severe attacks.

Medications

Your doctor can prescribe a number of different medicines based on your specific condition. There are two common types of medicines that doctors often prescribe to help keep your asthma under control: long-term maintenance medicine to cut down on inflammation (anti-inflammatory drugs) and quick-acting rescue medicines to open the airways (bronchodilators).

Maintenance (anti-inflammatory) drugs offer long-term control by reducing swelling and mucus in the airways. This lowers your lungs' reaction to triggers and makes attacks less common.



Rescue (bronchodilators) drugs clear mucus from the lungs and relax the muscles that constrict the airways during an attack. They can be used for quick relief (relieving symptoms during an attack) or for long-term control (preventing attacks).

Both medicines are most commonly delivered through inhalers and are a key part of any treatment plan. Make sure your doctor goes over when and how to take your medicine before you start using it.