

**Asthma Action Plan** (to be completed with your doctor)

**Green Zone: (80 to 100% of my personal best)**

Peak Flow between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (100% = personal best)

- You can do all the things you usually do.
- Your asthma medicine is working.

Medicine	Dose	How Often
TAKE		

**Yellow Zone: (50 to 79% of my personal best)**

Peak Flow between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

- You have some asthma symptoms.
- Your asthma is waking you up at night.
- You can only do some of the things you usually do.
- You need your asthma medicines more than usual.

Medicine	Dose	How Often
ADD		

**Red Zone: (Less than 50% of my personal best)**

Peak Flow less than \_\_\_\_\_

- You have asthma symptoms that last longer than 24 hours.
- You are very short of breath.
- You can't do most of the things you usually do.
- Your asthma medicine isn't helping your symptoms.

Medicine	Dose	How Often
ADD		

**Call your doctor NOW!**

Can't reach your doctor? Call 911 or have someone take you to the ER.

**Sources**

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [www.cdc.gov/nchs/FASTATS/asthma.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/FASTATS/asthma.htm).
2. American Lung Association. Asthma Action Plan. [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org).
3. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Asthma Education and Prevention Program; National Institutes of Health. *Nurses: Partners in Asthma Care*. NIH Publication No. 95-3308.
4. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health. *Facts about Asthma, Controlling Your Asthma*. NIH Publication No. 97-2339.
5. Asthma Control Test.™ Copyright 2002 by QualityMetric Inc. Available online at [www.asthmacontrol.com](http://www.asthmacontrol.com).

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**Taking Charge of Your Asthma**



## Questions to ask your doctor

Be prepared for your next doctor visit. Bring a list of questions. These can get you started. Add your own to this list:

- What medicines should I take to help manage my asthma? Long-term? Quick-relief? What are the most cost-effective medication options?
- Am I taking my medicine the right way? Should I use a spacer?
- What will my asthma treatment do for me? What is the goal?
- How do I find my best peak flow reading? How and when should I use my peak flow meter?

Be sure to talk with your doctor about:

- Your Asthma Action Plan
- Your triggers — how to avoid them and what to do if you can't avoid them

NOTES:

## Asthma Control Test™

Take this test to find out if your asthma is under control.<sup>1</sup>

1. In the past 4 weeks, how much of the time did your asthma keep you from getting as much done at work, school or at home? Score

All of the time	<b>1</b>	Most of the time	<b>2</b>	Some of the time	<b>3</b>	A little of the time	<b>4</b>	None of the time	<b>5</b>	
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2. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you had shortness of breath?

More than once a day	<b>1</b>	Once a day	<b>2</b>	3 to 6 times a week	<b>3</b>	Once or twice a week	<b>4</b>	Not at all	<b>5</b>	
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3. During the past 4 weeks, how often did your asthma symptoms (wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, chest tightness or pain) wake you up at night or earlier than usual in the morning?

4 or more nights a week	<b>1</b>	2 or 3 nights a week	<b>2</b>	Once a week	<b>3</b>	Once or twice	<b>4</b>	Not at all	<b>5</b>	
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4. During the past 4 weeks, how often have you used your rescue inhaler or nebulizer medication (such as albuterol)?

3 or more times per day	<b>1</b>	1 or 2 times per day	<b>2</b>	2 or 3 times per week	<b>3</b>	Once a week or less	<b>4</b>	Not at all	<b>5</b>	
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5. How would you rate your asthma control during the past 4 weeks?

Not controlled at all	<b>1</b>	Poorly controlled	<b>2</b>	Somewhat controlled	<b>3</b>	Well controlled	<b>4</b>	Completely controlled	<b>5</b>	
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**If your score is 19 or less, your asthma may not be under control. Be sure to talk with your doctor about your results.**

TOTAL



**Take charge of your health. Learn as much as you can. It's one of the most important things you can do for yourself.**

**Asthma is a lung disease.** It makes your airways narrow. That's why it feels so hard to breathe. Asthma is a "chronic disease." That means it's there all the time, even when you feel OK.

## Take charge

Welcome to Taking Charge of Your Asthma. Did you know asthma is a common disease? In the United States, more than 23 million adults and children have it.

If you or your child has asthma, you may have many questions. What is asthma? What triggers — or starts — it? How is it treated? What is an asthma action plan?

Don't let these questions worry you. We can help you learn about asthma. And, that may help you take charge of your health.

### This guide can help you:

- Learn more about medicines that can help asthma.
- Understand what makes your asthma worse. Or, what starts an asthma attack.
- Know when to take action if you do have an asthma attack.
- Learn about how asthma is different for children.
- Know what questions to ask your doctor.

**Don't miss the back of this booklet. Tear out the Asthma Action Plan. Bring it with you to your next doctor visit. Fill it out with your doctor's help. A good plan can help you manage your or your child's asthma.**

## Asthma medicines

There are two main kinds of medicine for asthma. You might take these medicines as a pill. Or, you may take them through an inhaler or through a nebulizer — a breathing machine.

Long-term medicines — to control asthma every day:

Long-term control medicines are usually taken every day and should be taken as prescribed by your physician. If you feel fine, you might think you don't need them. But, you do need them so that you can continue to feel fine.

These medicines help your airways open up. When you take them you may not have as many asthma attacks. Or, when you have an attack, it may be milder.

Quick-relief medicines — when you need relief suddenly:

These medicines can help you breathe when you're having an asthma attack. Take them only when needed. Be sure to follow your Action Plan when you have symptoms.

If you manage your asthma well each day, you should not need your quick-relief medicines. Do you use them more than twice a week? If so, it might help to change medicines. Ask your doctor about it.

Take your medicines every day, just as your doctor tells you to. Is it hard to remember to take them? Make it part of your routine. Maybe you can take them at the same time you brush your teeth or when you eat a meal.

## About inhalers

An inhaler might seem easy to use. But, you need to use it the right way for it to work. Be sure to bring your inhaler to your next doctor visit. He or she can check to see if you are using it right.

How to use a metered dose inhaler (MDI):

1. Take off the cap. Shake the inhaler.
2. Breathe out slowly.
3. Hold the inhaler the way your doctor showed you. It should be slightly away from your mouth — a space about two fingers wide.
4. Slowly breathe in through your mouth at the same time you press down on the inhaler. Keep breathing in for 3 to 5 seconds.
5. Now hold your breath for 5 to 10 seconds. Then breathe out slowly.
6. Do this again as ordered by your doctor. Wait at least 1 minute between puffs.

### Read these tips!

Some people can't breathe in deeply. So, an inhaler might be hard to use. And, children with asthma may have special needs, too. These tools can help:

- Spacer — this is attached to an inhaler. It can help get the medicine down into the lungs, instead of only going into the mouth.
- Nebulizer — this is also called a breathing machine. It creates a mist of medicine. You inhale the mist for 5 to 10 minutes.



## Your primary doctor

Do you have a primary doctor? This is a doctor you see for all of your health concerns. If you don't have one, you should get one. You can choose a doctor that's in your health plan's network. Need help finding one? Look at the back of your health plan ID card. Call the Customer Service number. They can help you find one.

A primary doctor can help you manage your asthma. But, you need to work as a team. Tell your doctor about how you're feeling. Listen carefully, and ask questions.

The more you work together, the better your doctor will be able to treat your asthma.



### What kind of doctor should I see?

- Primary care doctor. You see this doctor for all types of health concerns. He or she often manages asthma, too.
- Lung doctor (pulmonologist) or allergy doctor. There may be times when you have a lot of symptoms. Or, your medications might not be helping you. That's when you may be referred to one of these specialists.

Be sure to check your benefit plan for specific coverage details.

## Working well with your doctor

Consider these tips to make the most of your doctor visit. Together, you can help manage your asthma.

1 Bring a list of everything you take:

- Prescription medicines
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Supplements or herbs
- Vitamins

2 Bring your Asthma Action Plan. Talk about any changes that might be needed. Make sure your Action Plan is right for you.

3 Bring a list of all your questions for the doctor. Not sure what to ask? Look at the list on the last page of this booklet. It will help you get started.

4 Be sure your doctor:

- Helps you take steps to stay healthy
- Has a plan to treat your asthma
- Makes time for your questions
- Listens to you



### Triggers

Triggers are the things that can cause asthma attacks. An asthma attack means your asthma is getting worse. The first step to managing your asthma is knowing your triggers. When symptoms hit, think about these things. Were you doing anything different? Where were you? What was around you? Were you happy or sad?

**Here are some common triggers, or things that can make asthma worse:**

Irritants	Allergens	Other
<p>Tobacco smoke or any other type of smoke</p> <p>Smog or air pollution</p> <p>Strong odors from perfumes, air fresheners, chemicals, etc.</p>	<p>Dust and dust mites</p> <p>Pollen or seasonal changes</p> <p>Pets or other animals</p> <p>Mold and mildew</p> <p>Cockroaches</p>	<p>Weather changes – cold or hot air</p> <p>Illness – colds, flu or other infections</p> <p>Sports or exercise</p> <p>Stress</p> <p>GERD (gastro-esophageal reflux disease)</p>

**Be sure to talk with your doctor about your triggers. Together, you can make a plan for avoiding them. You can also plan what to do when you can't avoid them.**

## Kids' corner

In some ways, asthma can be the same for children as it is for adults. But, children's lungs are smaller. That means airways are more narrow. So, for children an attack can happen very fast. The symptoms could be severe, or strong.

1. Watch for these signs in your child. They may mean an asthma attack is coming on:

- Coughing, especially at night
- Breathing faster than usual
- Whistling noise when breathing out
- Having a hard time sitting still
- Trouble talking
- Getting tired or out of breath easily

2. Children may need to use spacers or nebulizers. These tools can help medication get into their lungs. Talk with your doctor about what's right for your child.

3. Be sure to have an Asthma Action Plan for school, too. This will tell the school nurse, teacher and coaches what to do if symptoms flare up. List these things in the Action Plan:

- Asthma triggers or things that may cause your child's asthma to get worse.
- Warning signs that an attack is coming.
- Medicine your child takes. How and when to give the medicine.
- When to call for immediate medical help.
- Phone numbers to reach you and your child's doctor.

4. Be aware of your child's feelings. Children can feel embarrassed, frustrated or sad about having asthma. They may feel different from the other kids. They even may feel scared about having an attack at school.

Talk with your child. Listen to his or her worries. Reassure your child that asthma is common. Knowing that you're there and you understand can make a difference.

You can help your child learn to take charge of his or her asthma. Talk about triggers. Work on an action plan together. Encourage your child to speak up at doctor visits.

## How to use a peak flow meter

Peak flow meters are helpful tools. They tell you how open your lungs are. That can help you know if an asthma attack is coming on. Ask your doctor how often you should check your peak flow.

1. Move the pointer to the bottom of the numbered scale.
2. Stand up.
3. Take a deep breath. Fill your lungs as much as you can.
4. Put the mouthpiece in your mouth. Close your lips around it.  
Do not put your tongue in the hole.
5. Blow out as hard and as fast as you can —  
on one single blow.
6. Write down the number you get.  
Repeat these steps two more times.
7. Record the highest number.  
This is your peak flow for that day and time.



## Healthy living for a healthy you

Consider these tips that may help you keep your asthma under control:

**Visit your doctor.** Follow your doctor's orders about how often you need to be seen.

**Take your medicines.** Talk with your doctor about how to take your medicine the right way. Follow directions carefully.

**Ask your doctor about these shots.** Flu shots are given once every year, starting in the fall. Ask your doctor if they're right for you. There also is another shot that prevents pneumonia. Talk with your doctor about both types of shots.

**Quit smoking.** Don't put it off another day. If you don't smoke, be sure to stay away from other people's smoke. This is called secondhand smoke. It's very bad for you. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or visit <http://1800quitnow.cancer.gov> for more information on quitting.

**Use your action plan.** Talk with your doctor about it at each visit. Make sure it really works for you.

**Watch for signs of depression.** Having asthma can be hard at times. Be aware of your feelings. Do you think you may be depressed? Or, are you struggling with your feelings? If so, tell your doctor about it. He or she can help.

## Stay in control — know your score

The Asthma Control Test™ is quick and easy. It's recognized by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Take the test today. You can learn if your asthma is under control.

### How to take the Asthma Control Test

- Answer each question. Write the answer number in the box to the right.
- Add the numbers together. Then, write the total score in the TOTAL box.
- Talk about it with your doctor.

**You can also take this test online.  
Go to [www.asthmacontrol.com](http://www.asthmacontrol.com).**

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The Asthma Control Test is for people with asthma 12 years and older. You can find a test for children younger than 12 years at **[www.asthmacontrol.com](http://www.asthmacontrol.com)**.