

Asthma Education Plan

What I need to learn about asthma

By the time I leave the hospital, I will be able to:

1. Understand my condition.
2. Use medicine correctly.
3. Monitor symptoms and use the asthma action plan.
4. Recognize when to seek medical care.
5. Understand my triggers and how to control them.
6. How to create an action plan with your doctor.

The staff will use three questions and answers to teach me about my asthma:

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words or ask me to show them what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about asthma and what to do if I have problems.

What is my main problem?

I have asthma. Asthma causes me to have breathing problems such as wheezing and coughing, shortness of breath, or my chest might feel tight. Asthma causes the air passages in my lungs to swell and become smaller. When these small breathing tubes in the lungs swell, they can clog with mucus. Repeated flare-ups (exacerbations) can cause more damage to my lungs. I can prevent flare-ups of my asthma when I understand more about what causes these flare-ups.



Used with permission from the Allergy Asthma Network

Asthma can start in childhood and can last a lifetime. It can also seem like it is gone and return in adulthood. For some people, asthma signs and symptoms flare up in certain situations:

- Exercise-induced asthma: may be worse when the air is cold and dry.
- Occupational asthma: triggered by workplace irritants such as chemical fumes, gases or dust.

- Allergy-induced asthma: triggered by airborne substances, such as pollen, mold spores, cockroach waste or flakes of skin and dried saliva shed by pets (pet dander).

What do I need to do?

Understand my condition

1. Asthma is a condition where the air passages in the lungs become narrowed.
2. Small breathing tubes in the lungs swell and clog with mucus.
3. Inflammation occurs in the lungs that can cause repeated flare ups.
4. Symptoms include shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing and chest tightness.
5. Triggers can cause a flare-up of asthma symptoms. Triggers may include: physical activity, air pollutants and irritants, respiratory infections, stress, and gastroesophageal reflux (GERD).
6. Occurs in childhood and can last a lifetime. Or can go away and return in adulthood.
7. Can develop as occupational asthma.

Use my medicines correctly

1. Have your respiratory therapist teach you the correct way to use breathing medicines.
2. Medicines used to treat asthma symptoms include quick relief inhalers (relievers) and preventive (controller) inhalers.
3. Take medicines as your provider tells you to.
4. Take your medicines at the same time every day.
5. Do not run out of medicine.
6. Carry your quick-reliever inhaler with you.

Monitor symptoms and use the action plan zones. Watch for:

1. Wheezing and shortness of breath that does not get better with medicine.
2. An increase or change in secretions from clear to yellow, green, gray or bloody.
3. Muscle aches, chest pain or thickening of secretions.
4. Your peak flow is in the yellow or red zone.
5. Coughing at night.

Recognize I need to seek medical attention if:

1. Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath that medicines do not help.
2. Confusion or agitation (your family may notice this).
3. An oral temp above 102 degrees that is not controlled by medicines.
 - Your baby older than 3 months has a rectal temp of 102 degrees or higher.
 - Your baby less than 3 months has a rectal temp of 100.4 degrees or higher.
4. Peak flow is in the red zone (less than 50% of personal best).
5. If you cannot speak a complete sentence without stopping to breathe in between words.
6. A rapid heartbeat, breathing is hard and fast, nose opens wide or ribs show.

Asthma Action Plan Zones:

- I am in the green zone if:
 - I am not coughing.
 - My chest is not tight.
 - I can do my usual activities.
 - I can sleep through the night.
 - My peak flow meter personal best is _____.

- I am in the yellow zone if:
 - I am coughing and wheezing.
 - My chest is tight.
 - I am having trouble breathing.
 - I wake up at night with trouble breathing, coughing or wheezing.
 - I cannot do all my usual activities.
 - My peak flow meter is less than my personal best but still more than half of my personal best.

- I am in the red zone if:
 - I am having a lot of trouble breathing.
 - My quick relief medicine is not helping.
 - I cannot do what I usually am able to do.
 - I have been in the yellow zone or worse for over 24 hours.
 - My peak flow meter is less than half of my personal best.

Know my triggers and how to control them:

1. Stop smoking or vaping.
2. Remain calm during an asthma attack.
3. Identify and avoid triggers:

Triggers	What I Need to Do
Smoke	All family in the household must quit smoking. No smoking in a car. Avoid candles, fireplaces, kerosene heaters and fires.
Dust mites	Cover your mattress and pillow with an allergen proof cover. Wash bedding once a week in hot water. Electrostatic air cleaners may help. Keep stuffed animals out of beds and wash frequently in hot water. Cold water does not kill dust mites.
Animal dander	Keep pets outdoors and out of your bedroom. You may have to give up your pet.
Mold	Clean with a cleaner that contains household bleach. Use a dehumidifier in damp areas such as a basement.
Pollen	When the pollen count is high, stay indoors. Talk with your provider about medicines to prevent allergy symptoms.
Strong odors	Scents from perfumes, deodorants and cleaning supplies can affect a person with asthma. When possible, choose cleaning and personal care products that are odor and fragrance-free.

Triggers	What I Need to Do
Exercise	If exercise causes your asthma symptoms, your provider may prescribe a quick-relief medicine to use 15 to 30 minutes before physical activity. Check the air quality if you plan to exercise outside.
Cockroaches	Keep food and garbage in closed containers. Do not leave food out. Get rid of cockroaches.
Food	Certain foods (if allergic) may trigger asthma symptoms.
Weather	Cold, windy or stormy weather, high humidity, pollen and air pollution can trigger asthma symptoms. Check the air quality.
Medicines	Discuss any over the counter or prescription medicines you take such as aspirin, fever-reducers or anti-inflammatories with your provider.
Infections	Respiratory infections (like colds) can cause inflammation that can trigger asthma flare-ups. Get your influenza vaccine every year.
Stress	High stress levels can trigger asthma attacks. Stay calm.

Create an Asthma Action Plan with your provider

1. Use a peak flow meter when you are well and when you are sick. Peak flow meters check how your lungs are working.
2. Your action plan can tell you how to manage your asthma based on your symptoms and peak flows.
3. Review your action plan with your provider.

Why is this important to me?

1. Managing my condition can help prevent or lessen asthma attacks.
2. Partnering with my provider on a regular basis will help me control my symptoms. My asthma action plan will help me self-manage my symptoms.
3. I can prevent flare ups that can lead to the need for hospital care.
4. Taking my medicines daily can help to control the symptoms of my asthma.

If I commit to taking my medicines, talk with my provider to make an asthma plan and avoid exposure to my triggers, I can improve the quality of my life.

Asthma Education Plan

Resources for Staff

- Asthma Education Plan
- [Asthma Triggers and Exacerbation \(elsevier.com\)](#) Video in English or Spanish.
- [Introduction to Asthma \(elsevier.com\)](#) Video in English or Spanish.
- [Signs and Symptoms of Asthma \(elsevier.com\)](#) Video in English or Spanish.
- [Introduction to Treatment of Asthma \(elsevier.com\)](#) Video in English or Spanish.

Teaching Tools (items give to the patient)

- Asthma Education Plan
- Asthma action plan
- Peak Flow Meter Education Plan
- Smoking Cessation Booklet
- GINA Patient Guide: You Can Control Your Asthma
- Dusty the Asthma Goldfish and His Asthma Triggers (pediatrics only)

References

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Are there any contraindications to this teaching?

Some patients may be resistant to education about their illness or changes they may need to make such as quitting smoking or no smoking in home or car. Pt. is in an exacerbated state; it is not the time to learn.

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