

Live Your Best Life with Asthma

TAKE STEPS TO MANAGE AND IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH



Control Your Asthma in 4 Simple Steps

Living with a chronic illness like asthma is not easy, but the good news is – you can control it.

Learning to avoid triggers, how to use a peak flow meter, taking your prescribed medications, and having an action plan can stop asthma from changing the quality of your life.



1 Find your triggers

Common symptoms

- **Shortness of breath.** This may occur often or sometimes.
- **Coughing (mostly at night).** The cough may be dry or include mucus.
- **A wheezing or whistling sound** when you breathe, which is caused by thinning or clogged airways.
- **Tightness** in your chest.

Common triggers



Mold, dust or pollen



Secondhand smoke



Exercise or stress



Strong odors



Food Allergies



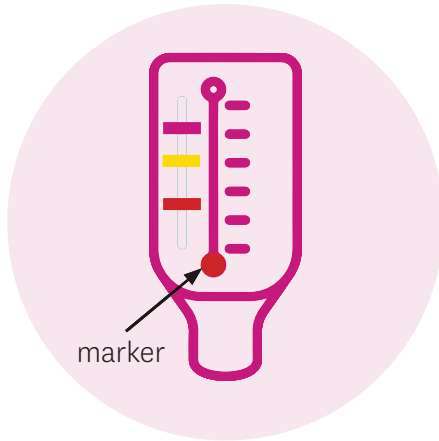
Pet dander



You are ill

2 Check your peak flow readings

A peak flow meter is an early warning device. It can show if your asthma is getting worse, even before you feel symptoms. It measures how fast you can push air out of your lungs. If your airways are blocked, it will be hard to blow air out. Your “normal” peak flow reading is based on your age, height, sex, and race.



How to use a peak flow meter

1. Move the marker to the lowest number.
2. Standing or sitting up straight, put the mouth piece in your mouth and close lips tightly around the mouth piece.
3. Take as deep a breath as you can.
4. Blow air out as hard and fast as you can to move the marker as far as you can with your breath.
5. Remove the meter from your mouth, and check the marker. Write down where it is on the scale.
6. Return the marker to the lowest number.
7. Repeat the test two more times. Write down the date, time and highest of the three numbers. This is your peak flow reading number.



3 Use prescribed medications the right way

Your doctor may prescribe medications to help stop asthma attacks. There are two major types of asthma medications. Check with your doctor to learn which one to use and how often.

Long-term control (controller medication)

Long-term controller medications decrease swelling in the lungs and work slowly and longer to help you breathe. Long-term controller medications prevent asthma attacks, but can't stop one that has already started.

Quick relief (rescue medication)

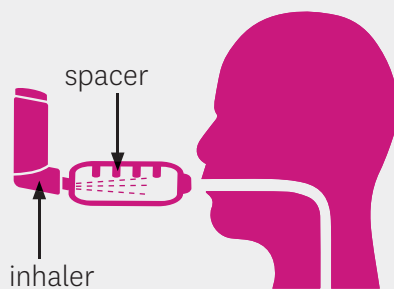
Quick-relief medications work fast to make breathing easier.

Keep your medications from running out by keeping track of how many puffs you use:

- Read the number of puffs on the label, divide this by the number you use each day. This is how many days your medication should last.
- Mark your calendar and inhaler with the date the medication will run out.

Three benefits of a “spacer” or “holding chamber”

1. More medication will get into the lungs.
2. Fewer side effects.
3. Less medication on your tongue and throat.



4 Have an action plan



Work with your doctor to make an action plan.
An action plan helps you:

- Spot symptoms.
- Safely control asthma attacks on your own.
- Know when and how to use quick-relief and long-term controller medications.
- Know when to go to your doctor, call the Nurse Advice Line or an emergency room (ER).

An action plan can help cut severe flare-ups, which means you'll feel better and have fewer trips to the ER. Be sure to give copies to family members and friends. If your child has asthma, provide copies to everyone who cares for your child, including their school, child care, sport coach, baby sitters, camp counselors, and other family members.

If you have questions about controlling your asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), talk with your doctor. You can also call the **Health Net Nurse Advice Line at 800-675-6110**. If you feel you are suffering a life-threatening emergency, call 911 right away or go to the nearest emergency room.

Asthma and COPD

If you have asthma, you may also struggle with COPD. Like asthma, COPD is a lung illness that can make it hard to breathe.

A few facts about COPD

- While asthma affects people of all ages, COPD is more common in adults and gets worse over time.
- Smoking is the main cause of COPD. Smog and toxic fumes can also cause COPD.
- If you have COPD, you are at greater risk for problems from flu and pneumonia.

For more info about COPD, including a COPD action plan, please visit **www.lung.org**.



Use traffic light colors to help control asthma

Green is the Healthy Zone. Keep using your controller medication.

Yellow is the Caution Zone. Add rescue medication.

Red is the Danger Zone. Get emergency help now!



My action plan worksheet

Green zone: Healthy

All of these apply:

- ☐ My breathing is good
- ☐ I have no coughing or wheezing
- ☐ I sleep through the night
- ☐ I can do my normal activities
- ☐ I rarely need my rescue medication

Peak flow meter: _____
(80% or more of my personal best)

Keep using your controller medication every day to stay well and symptom-free.

Medication(s)	Controller	Rescue	How much	How often/when
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		

15 to 30 minutes before exercise or sports, take:

Yellow zone: Caution

Any of these apply:

- ☐ I am coughing or wheezing
- ☐ I have a hard time breathing
- ☐ I have shortness of breath
- ☐ I wake up at night due to asthma symptoms
- ☐ I have been exposed to something that makes my asthma worse
- ☐ I can do some, but not all, of my normal activities

Peak flow meter: _____
(between 50% and 79% of my personal best)

Keep using your controller medication every day and use your rescue medication as needed for quick relief.

Medication(s)	Controller	Rescue	How much	How often/when
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		

Call your doctor to get your asthma back in control:

- If you have to use your rescue (quick relief) medication more than two days.
- If your rescue medicine does not work.

You should feel better within 20–60 minutes after using the rescue medication:

- If your symptoms get worse or if you are in the yellow zone for more than 24 hours, follow the steps in the red zone!

Red zone: Danger

My asthma is getting worse fast:

- ☐ I am very short of breath
- ☐ My rescue medication is not helping
- ☐ I cannot walk/talk well
- ☐ I cannot do my normal activities

Peak flow meter: _____
(less than 50% of my personal best)

Take your controller and rescue medications and go to the emergency room or call 911 now!

Medication(s)	Controller	Rescue	How much	How often/when
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		
	☐	☐		

If you have questions or want to learn more about your Medi-Cal benefits, call Member Services at **800-675-6110 (TTY/TDD: 711)** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

www.healthnet.com

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