Asthma Management

WHAT IS ASTHMA?
Asthma causes swelling and inflammation in the breathing passages that lead to your lungs. When asthma flares up, the airways tighten and become narrower. This keeps the air from passing through easily and makes it hard for you to breathe out. These flare-ups are also called asthma attacks or exacerbations.

Asthma affects people in different ways. Some people only have asthma attacks during allergy season, or when they breathe in cold air, or when they exercise. Others have many bad attacks that send them to the doctor often.

Even if you have few asthma attacks, you still need to treat your asthma. The swelling and inflammation in your airways can lead to permanent changes in your airways and harm your lungs.

Many people with asthma live active, full lives. Even though asthma is a lifelong disease, treatment can control it and keep you healthy.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ASTHMA

- Wheeze, making a loud or soft whistling noise that occurs when you breathe in and out
- Cough a lot
- Feel tightness in your chest
- Feel short of breath
- Have trouble sleeping because of coughing or having a hard time breathing
- Quickly get tired during exercise

Symptoms of asthma can be mild or severe. You may have mild attacks now and then or you may have severe symptoms every day, or you may have something in between. How often you have symptoms can also change. Your symptoms may be worse at night.

SEVERE ASTHMA ATTACKS CAN BE LIFE THREATENING AND NEED EMERGENCY TREATMENT!

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Family History
- Allergies
- Pollution
WHO TO CALL & WHEN

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR?
• Your medicine is not working as well as it has been
• Your symptoms are slowly getting worse
• You have cold or flu like symptoms and you develop a fever of 101° or higher that lasts longer than 2 to 3 days
• Breathlessness or wheezing occurs or becomes noticeably worse
• Your cough gets worse or lasts longer than 7 to 10 days
• You cough up any amount of blood
• Start having chest pain
• If you need to use the quick-relief inhaler more often than usual

ASTHMA ATTACKS CAN BE LIFE-THREATENING, BUT YOU MAY BE ABLE TO PREVENT THEM IF YOU FOLLOW YOUR DOCTORS PLAN!

WHEN SHOULD I CALL 911?
• Breathing Stops
• Moderate to severe difficulty breathing occurs
• Severe chest pain occurs, or chest pain quickly becomes worse
• Cough up 0.5 cup (120ml) or more of blood

CONTACT INFORMATION

My doctor: __________________________ Phone #: __________

Emergency Contact: ____________________________________________

Please keep this along with your medication list on your refrigerator where it is easily accessible by emergency personnel.
Along with doing a physical exam and asking about your health, your doctor may order lung function tests. These tests include:

- **Spirometry.** Doctors use this test to diagnose and keep track of your asthma. It measures how quickly you can move air in and out of your lungs and how much air you move.
- **Peak expiratory flow (PEF).** This shows how fast you can breathe out when you try your hardest.
- An **exercise** or **inhalation challenge.** This test measures how you breathe after exercise or after taking a medicine.
- **A chest x-ray**, to see if another disease is causing your symptoms.
- **Allergy tests**, if your doctor thinks your symptoms may be caused by allergies.

You will need routine check-ups with your doctor to keep track of your asthma and decide on treatment!
HOW CAN YOU PREVENT ASTHMA ATTACKS?

• Avoid irritants in the air, such as cigarette smoke or other air pollutant. Don’t smoke and try to avoid being around others when they smoke.

• Avoid things you are allergic to, such as pet dander, dust mites, cockroaches, or pollen. It may also help to take certain kinds of allergy medicine.

• Exercise. Ask your doctor about using an inhaler before exercise if this is a trigger for you.

• Other things like dry, cold air; an infection; or some medicines, such as Aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and Acid Reflux. Try not to exercise outside when it is cold and dry. Talk to your doctor about vaccines to prevent some infections, and ask about what medicines you should avoid.

SOMETIMES YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT TRIGGERS AN ASTHMA ATTACK. THIS IS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE AN ASTHMA ACTION PLAN THAT TELLS YOU WHAT TO DO DURING AN ATTACK.
HOW ASTHMA IS TREATED

• You can control asthma over the long term. Many people take controller medicine—usually an inhaled corticosteroid—every day. Taking controller medicine every day helps to reduce the swelling of the airways and prevent attacks. It is important to use your inhaler correctly so you get the right amount of medicine to help you breathe better.

• Treat asthma attacks when they occur. You use quick-relief medicine, such as albuterol, during an attack.
GREEN ZONE

Green means GO.
You are in the green zone of the asthma action plan if your peak expiratory flow is 80-100% of your personal best measurement. You want to be in the green zone everyday. You should have no asthma symptoms when you are in the green zone and do not need quick-relief treatment.

YELLOW ZONE

Yellow means CAUTION.
You are in the yellow zone of your asthma action plan if your peak expiratory flow is 50-79% of your personal best measurement. You may not have any symptoms, but your lung function is reduced. When you have symptoms, they may be mild to moderate, or they may keep you from your usual activities or disturb your sleep. Your action plan should state which quick-relief medicines you need to take, how much to take and when to take them.

RED ZONE

Red means STOP.
You are in the red zone of your asthma action plan if your peak expiratory flow is less than 50% of your personal best measurement. Your symptoms may be severe, and you may have extreme shortness of breath and coughing. If your symptoms and peak expiratory flow are in the red zone, seek medical help immediately. While you are seeking emergency help, follow your action plan and take your medicines as directed. You may need emergency treatment or admission to a hospital.
The best strategy for avoiding and treating asthma attacks is being able to recognize an attack and know what to do. Talk to your doctor about:

- **Your triggers.** Avoiding your triggers can help reduce your risk of an attack and reduce its severity.

- **Your symptoms.** In general these include a drop in your peak expiratory flow (PEF) and increased and more severe coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and tightness in your chest.

- Which **quick-relief medicines** you need to take and how to give them to yourself.

- **When emergency care is necessary.** If you have a large drop in PEF, or your quick-relief medicines are not working, or you are very short of breath, you may need emergency care. Your doctor will help you know about these signs.
MY CARE TEAM

My doctor is: ____________________________ Phone #: ___________

Pharmacy: ____________________________ Phone #: ___________

Hospital: ____________________________

Pulmonologist (Lung Doctor): ____________________________ Phone #: __________________

Allergist: ____________________________ Phone #: __________________

Oxygen Supplier: ____________________________ Phone #: ___________

Care Manager: ____________________________ Phone #: 414.771.6177
Going to your doctor can be overwhelming at times and can make you nervous. You may forget what you want to ask and/or forget what your doctor tells you. Use this sheet to write down your questions.

YOUR QUESTION
1. ____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

THE ANSWER

______________________________________________________________


YOUR QUESTION
2. ____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

THE ANSWER

______________________________________________________________


YOUR QUESTION
3. ____________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

THE ANSWER

______________________________________________________________