



Breathe
easy

POWER over asthma

Welcome to Breathe Easy.

Breathe Easy is a program for members with asthma. We want to help you better manage your asthma (or your child's asthma).

From time to time, we will send you information about asthma. We will cover topics like medicines, asthma triggers and asthma action plans. We will include lots of tips to help you or your child live better with asthma.

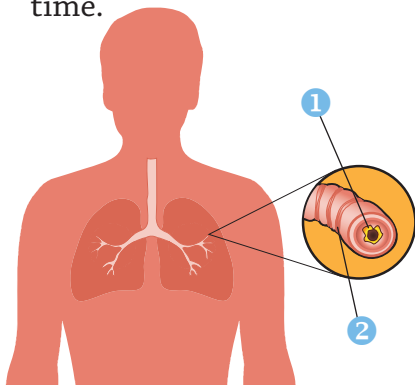
If you have questions about what you read or if you would like to talk to one of our asthma nurses, please call a Breathe Easy outreach representative toll free at **888.559.1010**. If you decide you don't want any more mailings, please call an outreach representative at the number above.



Asthma Basics

Asthma is a long-term disease that narrows and inflames the breathing tubes (airways) in your lungs.

How does asthma feel? Signs of asthma may include coughing, wheezing, chest tightness or shortness of breath. You might feel these at any time.



What happens to your airways when you feel your asthma? Two main things happen when you have asthma symptoms:

- 1 The airways swell and fill with mucus.
- 2 The muscles around the airways tighten. This makes it hard to move air through the airways.

Can asthma be cured? No. Asthma cannot be cured. But it can be treated and controlled. Asthma does not go away when your symptoms go away. With treatment, you can live without symptoms most of the time.



FirstChoice
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Causes of Your Asthma

Asthma can be made worse by things in the environment called triggers. Try to stay away from these things that set off your asthma symptoms. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about your asthma or your triggers.



Smoke

- + If you smoke, contact your doctor for help quitting.
- + Stay away from smoke-filled areas.
- + Don't let people smoke in the house or car.
- + Make sure fireplaces and wood-burning stoves are well ventilated.

Dust mites

- + Use special covers for pillows and mattresses.
- + Take rugs or carpet out of the bedroom.
- + Wash your bedsheets and blankets each week in very hot water.

- + Take stuffed toys out of the bedroom or wash them weekly in hot water.

- + Stay out of rooms that are being vacuumed.



Pets

- + Keep pets with fur or feathers out of your bedroom or home, if possible.

Exercise

- + Ask your doctor if you should take asthma medicine before you exercise.



Mold & Mildew

- + Fix water leaks in the home.
- + Keep your shower curtains clean.



Strong odors

- + Avoid perfume, talcum powder, strong-smelling cleaning products and aerosol sprays such as hairspray or insect repellent.



Pollen

- + Stay inside and keep windows closed midday and afternoon, when pollen levels are high.
- + Use air conditioning, if possible.

Cockroaches

- + Don't keep food in your bedroom.
- + Make sure food and garbage are sealed.

Winter Weather

- + On cold days cover your nose and mouth with a scarf to avoid breathing in cold air.



Colds & Flu

- + Stay away from people with colds or the flu.
- + Get plenty of rest.
- + Drink lots of fluids.
- + Get the flu shot every fall.
- + Wash your hands often, and don't touch your eyes, nose and mouth.



Medicines for Asthma

There are two main types of asthma medicines. They are **quick-relief (rescue)** medicines and **controller** medicines.

Quick-Relief Medicines. Everyone with asthma needs a quick-relief medicine to relieve asthma symptoms. A quick-relief medicine:

- + Works very fast to help you breathe more easily
- + Helps open your airways
- + Should be used as directed by your doctor

Controller Medicines. Most people with asthma also need one or more long-term controller medicines. These are used each day to help prevent symptoms. Some controller medicines help reduce the swelling inside the airways. Other controller medicines help relax the muscles that squeeze the airways. Controller medicines:

- + May help you have fewer flare-ups and may help control your symptoms
- + Are taken each day, as directed by your doctor. Take them even when you feel fine.



Tips:

- + **Keep your quick-relief inhaler with you all the time.**
- + **At your next doctor's visit, make an Asthma Action Plan. It will help you manage your asthma from day to day.**



Common quick-relief medicines are:

- + Albuterol
- + Ventolin HFA

Common controller medicines are:

- + Q-var
- + Flovent HFA
- + Pulmicort
- + Advair
- + Singulair

Peak Flow Meters

The peak flow meter is a tool that measures how well air moves out of the lungs. It alerts you when the airways begin to tighten, even before you have symptoms such as coughing or wheezing.

The peak flow meter can be used to help you and your doctor decide:

- + If your asthma action plan is working
- + When to stop or add certain medicines
- + When to get emergency care
- + What triggers are causing asthma problems

The peak flow meter helps you better understand your asthma.

Asthma Action Plan

Make an asthma action plan with your doctor at your next visit. Using one may help you manage your asthma better on a day-to-day basis.

This plan will help you decide:

- + What medicines you should take
- + How much to take
- + When to take them
- + When and how to get help

Your asthma action plan should include:

- + Emergency phone numbers

- + Asthma flare-up information
- + How to use your peak flow readings so you know when you may be headed for a flare-up, even before you have symptoms

Hand out your plan.

Give a copy to friends, relatives, teachers, coaches and baby-sitters so that they can help you if you have a flare-up.

The 3 color zones to help you decide what to do.

Green Zone

Your breathing is good and in control.

- + Follow your doctor's instructions for this zone even though you may feel fine.

Yellow Zone

Warning: you are having a flare-up.

- + Wheezing, coughing, tightness in the chest, shortness of breath, more mucus when coughing
- + Take your yellow zone medicines to keep it from getting worse.

Red Zone

Danger: you are having an attack.

- + It is hard to talk, breathing is hard and fast, heart rate is very fast, it is hard to walk, lips or fingernails are gray or blue, rescue (quick relief) medicine is not helping
- + Take your red zone medicines and get help now.