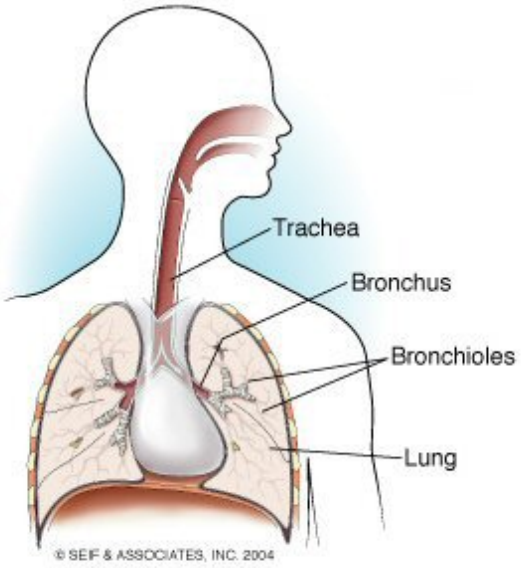
Adult Asthma with Action Plan

Asthma is a disease of the respiratory system. It causes swelling and narrowing of the air tubes inside the lungs. The narrowing comes from swelling and muscle spasm inside the air tubes. When this happens, there can be coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.

Knowing more about asthma can help you handle it better. It can not be cured, but medications and lifestyle changes can help control it.



CAUSES

Inflammation (soreness in the lungs) of the airways is the cause of asthma. This is triggered by allergies, viral lung infections, or irritants in the air. Allergic reactions can cause you to wheeze right when exposed to allergens or many hours later. Continued inflammation may lead to scarring of the airways. This means that over time, the lungs will not get better because the scarring is permanent. Asthma often runs in families.

SYMPTOMS

- Feeling short of breath.
- Chest tightness.
- Difficulty sleeping due to coughing, wheezing, or feeling short of breath.
- A whistling, wheezing sound with exhalation.
- Coughing or wheezing that is worse when you.
  - Have a virus (such as a cold or the flu).
  - Are suffering from allergies.
  - Are exposed to certain fumes or chemicals.
  - Exercise.

Signs that your asthma is probably getting worse include:

- More frequent and bothersome asthma signs and symptoms.
- Increasing difficulty breathing (this can be measured by a peak flow meter, which is a simple device used to check how well your lungs are working).
- An increasingly frequent need to use a quick-relief inhaler.

SOME COMMON TRIGGERS FOR AN ATTACK ARE:

- **Allergies** (animals, pollen, food, and molds) can trigger attacks.
- **Infection** (usually viral) commonly triggers attacks. Medicines that kill germs (*antibiotics*) are not helpful for viral infections. They usually do not help with asthmatic attacks.
- **Exercise** can trigger an attack in some people with asthma. Proper pre-exercise medications allow most people to participate in sports.
- **Irritants** (pollution, cigarette smoke, strong odors, aerosol sprays, paint fumes, etc.) all may trigger an asthmatic attack. SMOKING CANNOT BE ALLOWED IN HOMES OF PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA. People with asthma should not smoke and should not be around smokers.
- **Weather changes**. There is not one best climate for people with asthma. Winds increase molds and pollens in the air. Rain refreshes the air by washing irritants out. Cold air may cause inflammation.
- **Stress and emotional upset**. Emotional problems do not cause asthma but can trigger an attack. Anxiety, frustration, and anger may produce attacks. These emotions may also be produced by attacks.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Remain very calm during an asthma attack. If you or someone else with asthma seems to be getting worse and is unresponsive to treatment, **seek immediate medical care**.
- Control your home environment in the following ways:
  - Change your heating/air conditioning filter at least once a month.
  - Place a filter or cheesecloth over your heating/air conditioning vents.
  - Limit your use of fire places and wood stoves.
  - **Do not** smoke. **Do not** stay somewhere where others are smoking.
  - Get rid of pests (roaches) and their droppings.
  - If you see mold on a plant, throw it away.
  - Clean your floors and dust every week. Use unscented cleaning products. Use a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter if possible. If vacuuming or cleaning triggers your asthma, try to find someone else to do these chores.
  - If you are remodeling, change your floors to wood or vinyl.
  - Use allergy-proof pillows, mattress covers, and box spring covers.
  - Wash bed sheets and blankets every week in hot water and dry in a dryer.
  - Use a blanket that is made of polyester or cotton with a tight nap.
  - **Do not** use a dust ruffle on your bed.
  - Clean bathrooms and kitchens with bleach and repaint with mold-resistant paint.
  - Wash hands frequently.
- Talk to your caregiver about an action plan for managing your asthma attacks at home. This includes the use of a peak flow meter that measures the severity of the attack and medications that can help stop the attack. An action plan can help minimize or stop the attack without having to seek medical care.
- Always have a plan prepared for seeking medical attention. This should include calling your physician, access to local emergency care, and calling your local emergency services (911 in U.S.) in case of a severe attack.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is wheezing and shortness of breath even if medications are given to prevent attacks.
- An oral temperature above 101º F (38.3º C) develops.
- There are muscle aches, chest pain, or thickening of saliva with mucus (*sputum*).
- The sputum changes from clear or white to yellow, green, gray, or bloody.
- There are problems related to the medicine you are taking (such as a rash, itching, swelling, or trouble breathing).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You experience shortness of breath at rest or when engaging in very little physical activity.
- Using your usual quick-relief inhaler does not stop your wheezing or there is increased coughing.
- You have difficulty eating, drinking, or talking due to asthma symptoms.
- You develop severe chest pain.
- Your have a rapid pulse, difficulty breathing, or can not complete a short sentence.
- There is a bluish color to the lips or fingernails.
- You feel light-headed, dizzy, or faint.

Adult Asthma Action Plan

Patient Name: _____ Date: _____

Follow up appointment with physician:
Physician Name _____

Telephone # _____
Follow up recommendation _____

ALWAYS BRING ALL OF YOUR MEDICATIONS TO ALL OF YOUR APPOINTMENTS

POSSIBLE TRIGGERS
Tobacco smoke, dust mites, molds, pets, cockroaches, strong odors and sprays (burning wood in fireplace, incense, scented candles, perfume, paints, cleaning products), exercise, pollen, cold air, or the flu.

OK WHEN WELL: ASTHMA UNDER CONTROL

Symptoms: No cough or wheezing, chest tightness or shortness of breath either during the day or at night; can participate in usual activities.

If using a peak flow meter:
My optimal peak flow is:_____ to_____ (should be 80-100% of personal best)

Medicine(s):
Every day:
- Controller _____How much?_____When?_____
- Controller _____How much?_____When?_____

Before exercise:
- Reliever_____How much?_____When?_____

If symptoms are noted:
- Reliever/Rescue_____How much?_____When?_____

Call your physician if using reliever more than 2-3 times per week

CAUTION WHEN NOT WELL: ASTHMA GETTING WORSE

Symptoms: Cough, wheeze, shortness of breath, chest tightness, waking at night due to asthma, unable to participate in all of usual activities.

If using a peak flow meter:
My peak flow is:_____ to_____ (50-79% of personal best)

Add the following medicine to those used daily:
- Reliever/Rescue_____How much?_____When?_____

If symptoms and peak flow return to GREEN OK ZONE after one hour of above treatment, continue monitoring to make sure you remain in green zone.

If symptoms and peak flow DO NOT return to GREEN OK ZONE after one hour of above treatment:
- Reliever/Rescue_____How much?_____When?_____
- Oral Steroids_____How much?_____When?_____
- Call your doctor if:_____

IF SYMPTOMS GET WORSE: ASTHMA IS SEVERE - GET HELP NOW!

Symptoms: Severely short of breath, rescue meds have not helped, cannot participate in usual activities, you are having trouble walking or talking due to asthma symptoms, you are dizzy or faint, your fingernails or lips are bluish, your symptoms are the same or worse after 24 hours in **Yellow Caution Zone.**

If using a peak flow meter:
My peak flow is: less than_____ (50% of personal best)

Add the following medicine to those used daily:

- Reliever/Rescue_____How much?_____When?_____
- Oral Steroids_____How much?_____When?_____
- **CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY**

HAVE SOMEONE DRIVE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL RIGHT AWAY OR CALL YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES (911 IN U.S.) IF YOU ARE IN THE RED DANGER ZONE AFTER 15 MINUTES AND YOU HAVE NOT REACHED YOUR DOCTOR

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