



# Taking charge of your asthma

United  
Healthcare®  
Community Plan

## **You can take charge of your asthma**

Asthma is an illness that causes swelling in the airways of the lungs, making it hard for you to breathe.

Asthma is a condition you always have, even when you don't feel sick. Symptoms get much worse during an attack, so it is important to know your triggers.

Doctors don't know why some people have asthma and others don't. Medicine won't make it go away for good, but there are things you can do to help you deal with asthma.

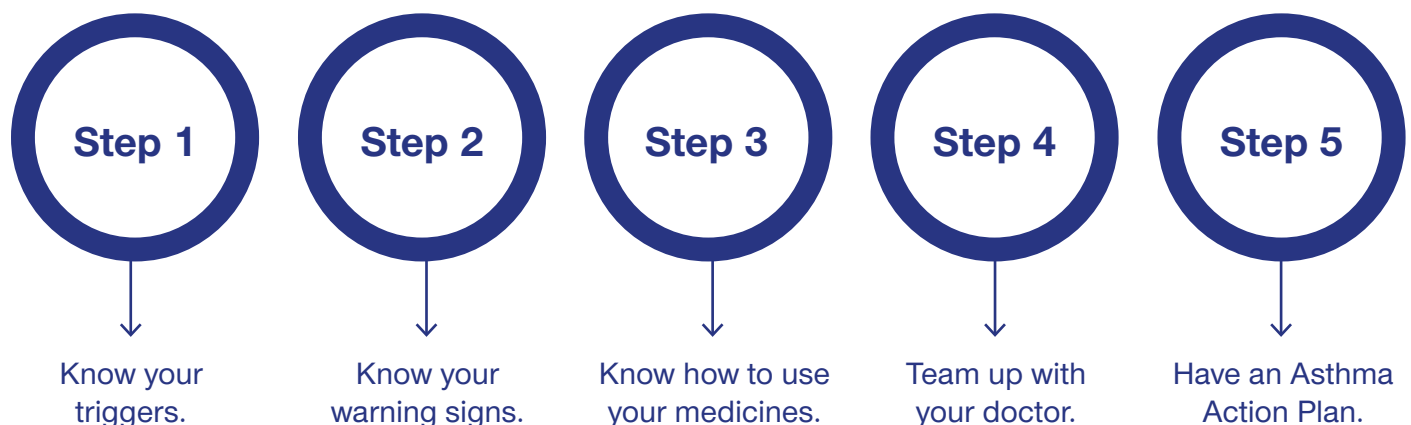


## Know the signs of asthma:

- Coughing, often at night or during exercise.
- Wheezing or whistling sound when you breathe.
- Shortness of breath or fast breathing.
- Frequent colds that settle in the chest.

You could have all of these problems, or just one. They may come and go. It is important to keep track so you can learn what triggers your asthma

## 5 simple steps to help you take charge:



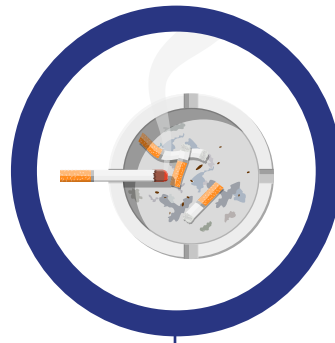
# 1

## Know your triggers

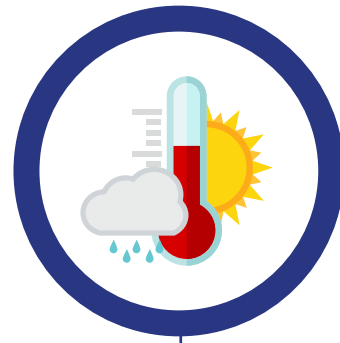
An asthma trigger\* is something that makes your symptoms worse. Triggers vary from person to person, so it is important to learn what those triggers are for you so you can avoid them as much as possible. If you can't avoid them, have your medicine ready.



↓  
Animals  
with fur.



↓  
Second-hand  
smoke.



↓  
Weather  
changes.

\*Not all asthma triggers are listed above.



↓  
Not exercising properly.



↓  
Being sick or allergies.



↓  
Pollen, pollution, strong odors or dust mites.

### **Stop smoking with some help.**

You can get help to quit smoking. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** or visit [smokingstophere.com](http://smokingstophere.com) and [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov) to find out more.

# 2

## Know your warning signs

An asthma attack can happen fast. This can be scary. That's why it's important to look for warning signs.

- Keep track of when you are having trouble. This will help you identify triggers and prevent asthma attacks.
- Time of day, like night or early morning.
- Time of year, like spring or fall.
- While you're active, like running or doing housework.
- When you're feeling stressed or emotional.
- When you are around asthma triggers and the places where the triggers are found.

**Make note of patterns and symptoms. Be sure to discuss them with your doctor. This will help the doctor suggest medicines and other treatments that will work best for you.**



Taking charge of your asthma

# 3

## Know how to use your medicines

It can be really hard to avoid your asthma triggers. Make sure you know how to use your medicine to stay safe. This will help you avoid trips to the emergency room.

**There are 2 kinds of medicine for asthma symptoms:**

**1**

### **Quick, temporary relief**

This inhaler is used at the first sign of an asthma attack. This type of inhaler is known as a rescue inhaler, and is used as needed. It should stop problems like coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath. It should only be used when needed and does not replace the controller. You should have this medicine with you at all times.

**2**

### **Long-term control**

This inhaler should be used every day, and is known as a controller. It controls asthma symptoms by helping airways stay open. If you use this kind of medicine, you may not have as many asthma attacks over time. Or, the attacks may be milder.

**Be sure to use your medicines exactly as the doctor tells you.**





### **Tips for using your medicine**

You may use an inhaler with both kinds of medicine. You might also use a machine called a nebulizer.

#### **Inhaler**

- An inhaler gets medicine right into your lungs.
- Bring your inhaler with you when you visit the doctor. The doctor or the doctor's nurse can make sure you are using it correctly. A pharmacist can also help.

#### **Nebulizer**

- This is also called a breathing machine. It creates a mist of medicine.
- A mask is used to breathe in the mist for 5 – 10 minutes.

#### **Peak flow meter**

- Your peak flow meter will show you how much air you can breathe into your lungs.
- Ask your doctor how often your peak flow should be checked. Be sure to write it down on your Asthma Action Plan.

# 4

## Team up with your doctor



People with asthma need extra care. In fact, you might see more than one doctor.

### **A primary doctor**

You should have a primary doctor who can treat your condition. If you don't have a primary doctor, we can help you find one. Call Member Services at the number located on the back of your ID card.

You can also find a primary doctor by visiting [myuhc.com/CommunityPlan](http://myuhc.com/CommunityPlan) and using the **Find-a-Doctor** tool.

### **A specialist**

You may also see an allergy doctor (or allergist) or a lung doctor (or pulmonologist). This could happen if you have lots of symptoms or frequent attacks.



## Ask your doctor

Use the questions below to discuss your Asthma Action Plan.

What medicines should I take for asthma problems?

Quick-relief: \_\_\_\_\_

Long-term/daily: \_\_\_\_\_

Am I using the inhaler the right way? \_\_\_\_\_

What do I do if I'm having problems? \_\_\_\_\_

How and when should I use a peak flow meter? \_\_\_\_\_

How can I find the best peak flow reading? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the yearly flu vaccine right for me? \_\_\_\_\_

What is my Asthma Action Plan? \_\_\_\_\_

What are my triggers? \_\_\_\_\_

How do I avoid them? \_\_\_\_\_

Can I go outside? \_\_\_\_\_

Other questions you may have: \_\_\_\_\_

# 5

## Have an Asthma Action Plan

An Asthma Action Plan is a written record of your treatment plan. You and your doctor should complete it together. Review it at each visit to make sure it's up to date.

Keep your Asthma Action Plan in a handy place at home. Share it with your family members and anyone close to you.

**The signs of asthma can be put into three zones: green, yellow and red. Know what your Action Plan is for each zone.**

## Your Asthma Action Plan

Bring this with you to your doctor. You can use it to help guide you on when to take your medicine and seek help based on your plan for each zone.



Patient name: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>GO – You are doing well.</b></p> <p><b>You have all of these:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing is good.</li> <li>• No cough or wheezing.</li> <li>• Sleep through the night.</li> <li>• Can go to work or spend time doing what you like.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Peak Flow</b></p> <p>from: <input type="text"/></p> <p>to: <input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Use these daily controller medicines.</b></p>		
		<p><b>Medicine</b></p>	<p><b>Dose</b></p>	<p><b>How often</b></p>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<p><b>CAUTION – Slow down.</b></p> <p><b>You have any of these:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First signs of a cold.</li> <li>• Cough or mild wheeze.</li> <li>• Tight chest.</li> <li>• Trouble breathing, especially at night.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Peak Flow</b></p> <p>from: <input type="text"/></p> <p>to: <input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Continue with green zone medicine and add:</b></p>		
		<p><b>Medicine</b></p>	<p><b>Dose</b></p>	<p><b>How often</b></p>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<p><b>DANGER – Get help.</b></p> <p><b>Your asthma is getting worse fast:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicine is not helping.</li> <li>• Breathing is hard and fast.</li> <li>• Nose opens wide.</li> <li>• Ribs show.</li> <li>• Severe wheezing.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Peak Flow</b></p> <p>from: <input type="text"/></p> <p>to: <input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>Take these medicines and call your doctor now.</b></p>		
		<p><b>Medicine</b></p>	<p><b>Dose</b></p>	<p><b>How often</b></p>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

# Helpful resources



For more information, visit these websites:

**Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America**  
aafa.org

**American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology**  
acaai.org

**American Lung Association**  
lung.org

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
cdc.gov/asthma; cdc.gov/copd

**UnitedHealthcare Community Plan**  
myuhc.com/CommunityPlan  
UHCCommunityPlan.com

**Important contacts:**

**Doctor's name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Urgent Care:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**If there's an emergency, call 911.**



**Notes:**

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