
Discharge Instructions for Asthma

You have been diagnosed with an asthma attack. Your healthcare provider can help you keep your asthma under control. Doing so will help you have fewer emergency department visits and hospital stays.

Managing asthma

- Take your asthma medicines exactly as your provider tells you. Do this even if you feel that your asthma is under control.
- Always use correct inhaler methods for your prescribed medicine delivery system. Refer to the information that came with your medicine from the manufacturer. Or call your healthcare provider if you have any questions about how to use the device. This includes a metered dose inhaler or nebulizer.
- Stay away from triggers that cause asthma flareups or symptoms.
- Tell your healthcare provider or asthma or allergy doctor if you've been diagnosed with a new or past health condition or disease.
- You may feel depressed or anxious. If so, tell your provider or asthma or allergy doctor.
- Learn how to watch your asthma. Some people watch for early changes of symptoms getting worse. Some use a peak flow meter. Write down your symptoms and peak flow readings in a diary. Your healthcare provider or allergy or asthma doctor should give you an Asthma Action Plan.
- Always have a quick-relief inhaler with you. If you were given a prescription, make sure you go to a pharmacy to get it filled as soon as possible.
- Stay at a healthy weight. Being overweight can affect how well your asthma is controlled. Work with your provider to find out the best weight for you.
- Don't be afraid to exercise. It may make you short of breath. But it can strengthen breathing muscles. It can also give you more energy. Walking is a good way to get oxygen moving all over your body. Ask your provider about safe exercises for you.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Do breathing exercises. Learn how to do belly breathing and pursed-lip breathing. These methods can help you breathe better. Taking slow, deep breaths at any time can give you more of the oxygen you need. Ask your provider about breathing exercises for you.



Controlling asthma triggers

Triggers are those things that make your asthma symptoms worse or that cause asthma attacks. Many people with asthma have allergies that can be triggers. You may need allergy tests. These are done to find out what you are allergic to. This can help you stay away from triggers.

Dust or dust mites are a common asthma trigger. To stay away from dust mites:

- Use dust-proof covers on your mattress and pillows. Wash bed sheets and blankets once a week in very hot water.
- Don't sleep or lie on cloth-covered cushions or furniture.
- Ask someone else to vacuum and dust your house. Do this on a regular schedule.
- If you do vacuum and dust yourself, wear a dust mask. You can buy them from the hardware store.
- Use a vacuum with a double-layered bag or HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter.

Pets with fur or feathers are triggers for some people. If you must have pets, take these safety steps:

- Keep pets out of your bedroom and off your bed. Keep the bedroom door closed.
- Don't use carpets or cloth-covered furniture in your home. If this is not possible, keep pets out of rooms with these items. Vacuum the furniture on a regular basis.
- Have someone bathe your pets every week. And brush them regularly.

If you smoke, do your best to quit:

- Join a stop-smoking program. This can increase your chance of success.

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- Ask your provider about medicines or other methods to help you quit.
 - Ask family members to quit smoking, as well.
 - Don't let anyone smoke in your home, in your car, or around you.
 - Don't use e-cigarettes.

Take these steps to limit exposure to air pollution:

- Don't exercise in high-traffic areas.
- Check the color-coded Air Quality Index daily. Limit outdoor activities when the index is orange.
- Stay inside when the index is red, purple, or maroon.

Exercise can be a trigger for some people.

- Know what to do if exercise is a trigger for you. Many people use quick-relief inhalers before exercise or physical activity. Ask your healthcare provider if you should use medicine before exercising.

Weather or pollen can make asthma symptoms worse.

- Try to keep your windows closed during pollen seasons and when mold counts are high.
- On cold or windy days, cover your nose and mouth with a scarf.

Other steps to take

- Stay up to date on all vaccines as advised by your healthcare provider.
- Wash your hands often with soap and clean, running water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Try to stay away from people who are sick. And stay away from crowds during cold and flu season. Respiratory infections, such as colds or the flu, may trigger your asthma.
- Use your quick-relief medicines as soon as you start to have respiratory symptoms. This may include a runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, or cough.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment as directed. Follow your Asthma Action Plan if you were given one. Healthcare providers or your allergy or asthma doctor will provide education in asthma self-management. This may include smoking cessation advice, breathing exercises, and ways to stay away from your triggers. This information can help you reduce asthma flareups and manage your symptoms.

Call 911

Call 911 right away if you have:

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- Severe wheezing
 - Shortness of breath that does not get better with quick-relief medicine
 - Trouble walking or talking because of shortness of breath
 - Coughing that does not improve with quick-relief medicine
 - Chest tightness that does not improve with quick-relief medicine
 - Blue, gray, or purple lips or fingernails
 - Peak flow meter readings less than 50% of your personal best that don't get better after using your quick-relief medicine (if you use a peak flow meter)