

Asthma Management: Becoming a Self-Manager

Becoming a good asthma self-manager can help reduce your symptoms, decrease the severity of your asthma attacks, and help to prevent trips to the emergency room.

To be a good asthma self-manager you need to practice skills, like: monitoring your breathing daily, recording your symptoms, avoiding the things that trigger your asthma, and writing down how often you take your medications.

Monitoring your breathing at the same time every day with an instrument called a peak flow meter will show you how sensitive your airways are day-to-day. Record your results in an asthma diary.

This is important because some days your breathing may be better or worse than on other days.

Even on days when you feel fine, the results may show you need to take caution. Daily peak flow monitoring is one of the best ways to manage your asthma.

Along with daily peak flow monitoring, keeping an asthma diary is an important step in effectively self-managing your disease.

An asthma diary is a place for you to document where and when you experienced any symptoms, medication you took that day and how much, and the results of your daily peak flow tests.

Keep your diary with you at all times and be sure to take it with you to your healthcare appointments.

"I think it's a great idea for my asthma patients to track their symptoms and track their medication usage, because when they come see me, I really want to be able to review with them, "When did you have a difficult time? When did you need your rescue inhaler? How often did you need it?" and if they write these down, it's much easier to track it and watch the patterns. We might find that certain seasons are problematic, certain triggers are problematic, certain animals, and that's really helpful information for the patient and for the treating physician."

Your provider will use the information in your diary to develop an asthma action plan.

This asthma action plan is a guide that directs you to take action when your symptoms flare up, or your peak flow results show that your lungs are not functioning at their best.

It's developed especially for you, depending on your individual needs.

To be an effective self-manager, you need to take an active role in your care and follow your plan.

Work closely with your healthcare provider, ask questions when you have them and learn what you need to know to self-manage your asthma.