

How to Manage Asthma

In the United States about 1 in 12 people have asthma. More than half of these people have an asthma attack annually.

Unfortunately, thousands of people die every year from uncontrolled asthma.

Even if you are currently being treated for asthma you may still be at risk of an asthma attack.

In this In the Know we will discuss medications to treat asthma, correct inhaler technique, and asthma action plans.

PEHP has also provided you a peak flow meter to better manage your asthma.



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Asthma triggers

» Attacks can be brought on by infections, allergens, weather, pets, and smoke.

How is Asthma Treated?

Asthma is treated with medications, both to control baseline inflammation and to help manage symptoms during an asthma attack.

Controller medications are taken on a daily basis and will reduce the frequency of asthma attacks. Controller medications include: inhaled corticosteroids, and a combination long-acting bronchodilators and corticosteroids.

It's important to take the controller medications exactly as prescribed, as these medications don't work for asthma attacks; they work to prevent asthma attacks in the future.

Short-acting medications (Ventolin, Proair, albuterol) are used to treat asthma attacks. These medications work by opening airways, therefore increasing the amount of air inhaled.

Short-acting medications, called rescue medications, work almost immediately with the maximum benefit occurring within 30 minutes.

These medications are available as a metered dose inhaler (MDI) or a dry powdered inhaler (DPI).

MDIs are available in a pressurized canister of medicine that comes with a plastic mouthpiece.

DPIs do not contain a

Pharmacy Options

PEHP offers many medications for the treatment of asthma:

Controller medications

Pulmicort	Tier 2	DPI
QVAR	Tier 2	MDI
Alvesco	Tier 2	MDI
Asmanex	Tier 2	DPI
Symbicort	Tier 2	MDI
Dulera	Tier 2	MDI

Short Acting medications

Ventolin HFA	Tier 2	MDI
Proair HFA	Tier 2	MDI

propellant and deliver the medication in a dry powder. DPIs are breath-activated, while breathing in the inhaler releases the medication and delivers it into your lungs.

Both MDIs and DPIs have their pros and cons and patient preference, but, regardless of the device chosen, inhaler technique is extremely important.

Proper inhaler technique has been associated with improved asthma control, better quality of life, and decreasing potential side effects.



MDI Technique Without a Spacer



Use Your Metered Dose Inhaler Properly to Maximize Effects

1. Shake the inhaler for five seconds. If it's the first time using the inhaler, prime the inhaler by spraying it into the air away from your face 4 times.
2. Hold the MDI upright and place your index finger on the top of the inhaler.
3. Breathe out normally.
4. Put the mouth piece between your teeth and close your lips around the mouthpiece OR position the mouth piece about two finger widths from your mouth.
5. Keep your tongue away from the opening of the mouth piece and press down on the top of the inhaler to release the medication.

DPI Technique

Please refer to the individual product as many DPIs require different techniques.

6. As you press down begin breathing in slowly and deeply until your lungs are filled. This should take 4-6 seconds.
7. Hold your breath for 5 seconds then breathe out.
8. If a second puff is required, wait 30-60 seconds and repeat steps.
9. If your inhaler contains a corticosteroid, remember to rinse well and gargle with water. Then spit the water out.

Do You Have an Asthma Action Plan?

An asthma action plan is a personalized worksheet developed by you and your doctor with information on how well your asthma is managed on a daily basis.

Asthma action plans generally include information about personal asthma triggers (colds, smoke, weather, animals, etc.), emergency contact information, and information regarding what “zone” you are in for the day.

The zone is determined by your peak flow meter and is divided into a green zone (asthma is well controlled), a yellow zone (asthma is getting worse), and a red zone (seek immediate medical attention). PEHP has included a peak flow meter to help you better manage your asthma.

All asthmatic people should develop an asthma action plan with their doctor.

Asthma action plans are available at www.lung.org, as well as on most smart phones.

Asthma Action Plan Personal best peak flow: _____

IMPORTANT INFO

Name: _____ Date: _____

Doctor name: _____ Doctor phone: _____

Emergency contact: _____ Emergency phone: _____

EXERCISE-INDUCED FLARE-UP

Instructions for an exercise-induced asthma flare-up

Medicine: _____ How much: _____ When: _____

Additional instructions: _____

TRIGGERS: ☐ pollen ☐ mold ☐ dust mites ☐ animals ☐ smoke ☐ food
☐ exercise ☐ cold/flu ☐ weather ☐ air pollution ☐ other _____

Symptoms

- Breathing is easy
- No cough or wheeze
- Can do usual activities
- Can sleep through the night

Peak flow from _____ to _____

The GREEN Zone (also known as the safety zone)

Use these controller medicines as listed:

Medicine	How much	How often / when

Symptoms

- Some shortness of breath
- Cough, wheeze, or chest tightness
- Some difficulty doing usual activities
- Sleep disturbed by symptoms
- Symptoms of a cold or flu

Peak flow from _____ to _____

The YELLOW Zone (also known as the caution zone)

Continue with controller medicines as above, and add these rescue medicines:

Medicine	How much	How often / when

Call your doctor if: _____

Symptoms

- Severe breathing problems
- Cannot do usual activities
- Difficulty walking and talking
- Rescue medicine is not helping

Peak flow from _____ to _____

The RED Zone (also known as the danger zone)

Take this medicine and call the doctor now!

Medicine	How much	How often / when

If symptoms don't improve and you can't breathe, call your doctor or 911.



Using a Peak Flow Meter

1. Move the marker to the bottom number.
2. Sit or stand up straight.
3. Take a deep breath.
4. Hold your breath and place the peak flow meter mouthpiece between your teeth and close your lips around it.
5. Blow out your breath as hard and quickly as you can.
6. Repeat this process two more times and record your highest score; this is your peak flow number.
7. Review your number, compare it against your personal best, then review it in your asthma action plan.

If you prefer not to receive future mailings, contact PEHP Integrated Care at 855-366-7400 to opt out.