

Tools to Manage Asthma

Most people with asthma live full, active lives by learning to keep asthma under control.

- ◆ **Become Educated about Asthma**

www.ginasthma.com
www.asthma.ca

- ◆ **Know and Avoid Your Triggers**

www.epa.gov/iaq/asthma/
www.noattacks.org/triggers.html

- ◆ **Take Your Medicines**

If you cannot afford your medicines, the following resources may be able to help you:

- ◆ The Caring Network, Inc.'s Prescription Assistance Program, phone: 724-884-0290
- ◆ www.NeedyMeds.com

- ◆ **Visit Your Health Care Provider Regularly**

Visit your health care provider regularly so that your symptoms can be checked and your treatments adjusted if needed.

- ◆ **Asthma Action Plans**

www.asthma.ca/adults/control/pdf/actionPlan.pdf
www.rampasthma.org

The Respiratory Health Task Force will focus on community outreach and education on the importance of respiratory health with an emphasis on asthma, influenza, and pneumonia. Community is defined as being comprised of schools, physicians, parents, asthmatics, churches, and people with low incomes.

Washington County Health Partners, Inc. (WCHP) is a not-for-profit, 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to the enhancement of the health and well-being of Washington County residents. WCHP assesses the county's health status periodically and works through volunteer task forces and programs to address identified health issues.

The information provided is current as of March 2006. If you find any of the information in error, please call 724-222-6511.

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Respiratory Health Task Force

Resource List for People with Asthma



In 2003, Washington County School Districts reported 2,134 students with asthma, or 6.65% of the student population. The American Lung Association's Washington County estimates for youth asthma are 3,655 and for adult asthma, 12,492.

This booklet was made to help people with asthma take control of their lives by explaining good asthma control, listing talking points with their health care provider, and providing helpful tools to manage asthma.

People with asthma can breathe easier when they work with their health care provider to take care of themselves.

Good Asthma Control

The goal of asthma management is to get total asthma control and keep it over time. Total asthma control means:

- ◆ No daytime symptoms
- ◆ No nighttime symptoms
- ◆ Not needing to use your rescue inhaler (no more than 4 or more times in a week)
- ◆ Not missing school or work due to asthma
- ◆ Normal breathing tests

Most people with asthma take two kinds of medicines because each treats only one aspect of the condition:

- ◆ Controllers, also called "preventers," reduce swelling in the airways. Controllers should be taken every day, whether or not you're having symptoms. **You will know that the controller medicine is working because you will, over time, have fewer and fewer symptoms.** When your asthma is totally controlled and you have no symptoms, do not stop taking them. If you do, the airway swelling may return.
- ◆ Rescue inhalers are very good at helping to lessen symptoms immediately. If you are coughing, use a rescue inhaler to ease symptoms. However, rescue inhalers do nothing for the main problem of swelling. Rescue inhalers are only a short-term solution to breathing problems and show that there is swelling present that requires a different controller medicine. Keep an eye on how often you use your rescue inhaler. Increased use over time is telling you the asthma is getting worse.

How to Talk to Your Health Care Provider

Being able to talk well with your health care provider will help you get the best care possible. A visit to your health care provider is a chance, not just to get a medical check-up, but also to create or change your asthma management program. Plan ahead for your health care provider visit by asking for at least 15 minutes to make sure that you have time to discuss your questions. Other things you can do to get ready for your appointments include bringing:

- ◆ A list of your most recent asthma symptoms and notes about whether they've changed since your last visit

- ◆ A record of your latest peak flow meter readings or symptom diary records
- ◆ Your action plan sheet so that you and your doctor can develop a plan. If you have one, then bring it in case it needs to be changed
- ◆ Medicines, and discuss whether they need to be changed or whether their amounts need to be adjusted
- ◆ Your inhaler(s) to review how you use it and discuss with your doctor whether you should see a specialist.
- ◆ A list of any questions you have. Prepare what you will say. It is not easy to remember everything, so write it down.
- ◆ If you are uneasy, bring someone you trust with you

Always tell your health care provider if you:

- ◆ Have missed school or work because of your asthma
- ◆ Are waking at night with asthma symptoms
- ◆ Needed to use your rescue inhaler 4 or more times a week
- ◆ Are not able to exercise

Some questions you might ask:

- ◆ What tests do I need?
- ◆ What makes my asthma worse?
- ◆ Can I keep playing a sport?
- ◆ How can I tell when my asthma is getting worse?
- ◆ What should I do if I have an asthma attack?
- ◆ Is there an asthma educator in my community that I can go to?
- ◆ Do I need to see a specialist?

Talk to your health care provider about a specialist referral if:

- ◆ You are taking asthma medicines but are not getting better
- ◆ Your asthma is made worse by your work setting
- ◆ You have been admitted to the hospital for your asthma
- ◆ You are having side-effects from your asthma medicines

