

# Manage Your Asthma

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a disease that affects the airways or tubes that carry air to your lungs. Asthma makes it hard for you to breathe. When a person has asthma, the airways get inflamed and smaller. This makes it harder for air to move in and out of the lungs.

Asthma affects people in different ways. There are times when you may have asthma attacks every now and then, or you may have them every day. Your asthma treatment can change over time. This is the reason why it is so important to pay attention to your symptoms.



## What can I do about my asthma?

### 1 Try to avoid the things that make your asthma get worse

To control your asthma you need to know what makes your asthma symptoms get worse.

Some examples of are:

Cigarette Smoke	Rats and Cockroaches
Mold	Dust Mites
Air Pollution	Pollen
Animal Hair	Dust

Sometimes health problems, like a cold or the flu, allergies, or doing exercise can also make asthma symptoms worse.

Pay attention to the things that cause your asthma symptoms and ask your doctor how to avoid them.

### 2 Learn how your asthma medicine works

There are two types of asthma medicines:

#### Preventive Medicines

- Prevent asthma symptoms and attacks.
- They keep airways from getting swollen.
- They can come in the form of a pill or inhaler.

#### Quick-relief Medicines

- Relieve symptoms quickly in case of an asthma attack.
- They help open up airways and make it easier to breathe.
- They can come in the form of a pill, liquid, or inhaler.

#### Keep in Mind:

- Your doctor may prescribe one or more of these medicines.
- Asthma medicines can be expensive. Ask your doctor about the most affordable asthma medicine and how you can pay less for it.

#### Ways to take asthma medicine



Inhaler



Pills

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## 3 Understand and follow your asthma action plan

With the help of your doctor you will develop an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan is a written document that will help you control your asthma every day.

Many action plans use the colors of a traffic light to help you understand what to do depending on how your asthma symptoms are: 1) **(Green Zone) under control**, 2) **(Yellow Zone) getting worse**, or 3) **(Red Zone) very serious**.

Remember to share your plan with your close family members and co-workers. They can help you follow the plan in case of an asthma attack. Below is an example of the information you may find in an asthma action plan.



### Warning Signs

You may have a severe asthma attack all of the sudden. If you have trouble walking and talking or your lips or fingers turn blue GO to the hospital or CALL 911.

### Green Zone: Your symptoms are under control.

#### What to look for

- You do not have any symptoms

#### What to do

- Take your preventive medicine as written in your action plan to prevent you from going to the **Yellow Zone**.

### Yellow Zone: Caution! Your symptoms are getting worse.

#### What to look for

- It's difficult to do day to day activities
- You wake up at night due to asthma
- Your chest feels tight or you are short of breath
- You are coughing and wheezing

#### What to do

- Take your preventive medicine and your quick-relief medicine(s) as written in your action plan.
- If you do not get your symptoms **under control** in an hour and they get worse, take another dose of your quick-relief medicine.
- Call your doctor because you can have an asthma attack at any time.
- If your symptoms are the same or get worse after 24 hours, you are in the **Red Zone**.

### Red Zone: Alert! Your symptoms are very serious!

#### What to look for

- You feel very short of breath
- You cannot do your day to day activities
- Your symptoms are the same or getting worse

#### What to do

- Keep taking your preventive medicine and your quick-relief medicine as written in your action plan.
- If after 15 minutes you don't feel better call an ambulance or go to the hospital emergency room.